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Malone. E. 225.



S T I L I C H O:

OR,

THE IMPENDING FALL OF ROME.

An Historical Tragedy.

BY

GEORGE MALLAM.

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THIS FIRST FRUIT
IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED
TO

MISS J—— R——,

IN COMPLIANCE WITH A PROPHETIC REQUEST
MADE TO THE AUTHOR YEARS AGO, THOUGH, DOUBTLESS,
YEARS AGO FORGOTTEN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- HONORIUS { *The young Emperor of Rome and the Western Portion of the Roman Empire.*
- STILICHO { *Commander-in-Chief of Roman Armies—Guardian of HONORIUS and of ARCADIVS (Emperor of Grecian or Eastern Division of Empire), and Minister of the Western Provinces.*
- LAMPADIUS { *A Roman Senator of noble family—Prætor of Rome.*
- OLYMPIUS *A Monk—Chaplain to HONORIUS.*
- CLAUDIAN *A Poet, a protégé of STILICHO.*
- EUCHERIUS *Son of STILICHO and SERENA.*
- MAXIMUS { *A Roman Captain in confidence of STILICHO.*
- COUNT HERACLIAN . { *Commander of Household Troops of HONORIUS.*
- ALARIC *King of the Goths.*
- LUDOVIC and other Chieftains of the Goths.
- THE POPE.
- SERENA *Wife of STILICHO and EMPEROR'S Aunt.*
- MARIA { *SERENA'S Daughter by a former husband—Betrothed to HONORIUS.*
- LUCIA *A young Heiress, STILICHO'S Ward.*
- Soldiers, Senators, Noblemen, Merchants, Monks, Nuns, Messengers, People, Chamberlain, Proconsul, Sacristan, &c. &c.

STILICHO.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Roman Army's Encampment, a day's march from Constantinople.*—STILICHO's Tent.

EUCHERIUS—*Enter to him* MAXIMUS. (*Both dressed in riding habits.*)

Euch. Well, Maximus, and so you're come at last.
You're always latest when I want you most.
I've been as restless as my horse outside ;
More so, much more : I hate this waiting so.

Max. I'm sorry that you've had to wait, my lord.
We'll start at once ?

Euch. No, no. It's not the ride
I want. I can take that at any time ;
I want to have a chat, good Maximus :
I've no one here to talk to but yourself.
What is this news about ?

Max. The news, my lord ?

B

Euch. What ? Then you have not seen the messenger,
Deck'd in strange habit, that has just arrived
From the young Emperor Arcadius ?
I thought you would have met him as you came.
I wonder what the tidings are he's brought !

Max. May he have brought provisions for the troops.
This country ever seems to get more bare—
More ravaged—as we near its capital ;
The towns are desolate, the villages
Burnt down, the people nowhere to be found :
Without our ships we scarcely should get food.

Euch. How anxiously Arcadius must wait
For our approach, though scarce more eagerly
Than I to see his eastern capital,
And vengeance on his grasping minister !
By Jove ! had I just mounted to my throne
And felt myself made puppet by the slave
That held my state, I should not, when I saw
My father's trusted captain drawing near,
Have sent my messenger with formal scroll.
No,—throwing my purple robes aside—I'd,
Myself, have welcomed my deliverer.

Max. And left, my good young lord, your capital,
It's treasure, troops, and high-protecting walls,
In the sole grasp of your too-grasping slave,
Whose speedy downfall you were gone to seek ?
Were it not safer to allay his fears,
By making ready for a friend's approach,
Than rouse them by an unexpected flight ?

Euch. My prudent Maximus, you're ever right ;
Altho' you grant Rufinus sight and heart
He—the mere household tyrant—cannot have.
Howe'er, the risk would be too great to chance.
Would it not make one mad to stand without
And see the brute grin at you from the walls,
Using against you your own arms and pow'r ?
Would he'd give fight—Ho !—but there's not a chance.
I dare now say this messenger's brought word
The coward's fascinated—fled, perchance—
I'll wager thee, before we reach the place,
This late all-powerful minister's a monk !

Max. Hast heard of his last act ? it speaks not
thus—

He's seized Count Lucius, your Father's friend,
Mock'd him and justice with a seeming trial,
And murdered him.

Euch. Great Heav'n ! Hast told your lord ?
Has he heard this, and moves he not at once ?

Max. I fear he has not heard ; unless, indeed,
The messenger just left has borne the news.
I learnt it from some slaves of Lucius
Who're come to sue protection from your lord.

Euch. I think he knows it all. I've heard his
tramp

Inside the tent like some night-sentinel's—
My blood beats quick. Before to-morrow's eve,—
Who knows ?—this murderer, this low-born slave,
May altogether 'scape our burning wrath.

Enter STILICHO from inner tent.

Stil. Ah, Maximus! I thought I heard your voice.
What is't, Eucherius, your face looks flushed?

Euch. Your noble friend, Count Lucius, is slain!
Rufinus, not ten days ago, impeached
His loyalty, and judged, and murdered him.

Stil. You echo but a sound?

Max. My noble lord,
I have just learned it from some slaves of his
Who're come to sue protection at your hands.

Stil. Great God! This racks indeed my late resolve—
This wakes up all his deeds to fiercer life.

[*Walks up and down.*] I am bewildered, like the elephants
I've seen in Eastern war in their first fight,
Enraged eno' to trample friend or foe.

These cunning Greeks, foul as are fair ones false,
As coldly pitiless—as smiling, too—

Oh! how I loathe them from my very soul!

Now I begin to feel my master's loss,
The weight of royal cares which he sustained,

Alone, as I must now, without my wife,
Without an officer, to counsel with—

Oh! this most subtle strife of politics!

Let me look calmly round. If I advance,
They will shut to their gates to keep me out,
And stay within the compass of their walls;
If I retire, Rufinus keeps the field,

Unchecked, unpunished, stronger than before:

I can do neither, yet I must do one—
Obey or disobey, I damage Rome !
If I obey and send their army on—
I will do so, it is my only course.
'Tis striking a just blow, if only one—
If hurriedly and in the dark, as 'twere,
Killing the leader, whilst it leaves his crew.
And, if it does the empire no sure good,
It 'venges Lucius—relieves my gall.
Rufinus, I'll obey, yet reach you still—
Were they but open enemies to fight !
Is't not enough to be dismissed, disarmed,
And treated as a traitor to the state,
But he must also taunt and torture me,
With importunity make boast his guilt,
Depending on forbearance he derides ?
Though you crouch down behind your master's robe
And throw the royal purple in my face,
The hand of Stilicho shall punish you.
I draw back but one foot—but for a time—
I may not use my sword, but Gainas shall !
O Lucius, thy cries shall be appeased.
Good Maximus we must withdraw ; I've had
The Emperor's command to forward on
His Eastern troops, and to remove myself
From off his territory.

Max. Thou, my lord?

Stil. E'en so, I have received his royal command.

Euch. You surely will not act on it, my lord?

'Tis but Rufinus' bolstered arrogance,
Deck'd with the imperial name, forsooth.
You, the sole guardian of the Emperor
Arcadius, as of Honorius,
Appointed so by Theodosius,
Are come to hand this empire's lord the reins
His miserable slave has kept from him :
And now, whilst you are here, e'en in your face,
He slays your friend. Will you, at his bare word,
Withdraw your army, march it back again—
Back through the country ruined by his rule,
And have it told at Rome that Stilicho
Dared not assail the tyrant in his den ?

Stil. Eucherius, enough ; excite me not :
My heart burns deeper, fiercer, than your own.
I want just now calm wisdom to survey,
As from a distance, each thing's proper height,
How bounded and controlled by time and space—
Matching my office with this present check ;
Not to be pricked with knowledge of near things—
The present foreground can be never missed
When its thick thorny brake entangles you—
The Roman plebs may gossip as it will,
I do what I, and not what they, think best.

Max. This news will cause surprise to all the
troops.

Shall you, my lord, retain the Eastern guards ?

Stil. Nay, they shall go ; I'll do as he desires :
I'll show at least that I can still obey.

Go you, I will myself harangue the troops,
Assemble them—send Gainas here at once.

[*Exit MAXIMUS.*]

He with the Eastern troops (I can trust both)
Shall set the Emperor free, if I may not ;
Shall open wide his eyes, and nerve his hand
For heavenly justice—though men care not for't
Beside weak generosity or fierce revenge.

Euch. Would not the dastard Greeks be paralysed
At the first motion of our quick advance ?

Stil. Had Constantine not left them walls and sea,
Perchance they might.

Euch. Now that we are so near
I'd put them to the test ; you have the right
Already, and, dost see, you'd gain the form.
Is it not better to obey the truth—
The inner form—than bow down to the form—
That form which e'en Rufinus but usurps ?

Stil. My boy, you do not realize results.

Euch. I'd do what's right, and let what follow come.

Stil. Do you not see, my boy, that the same power
Which used the Emperor's own seal would close
The city gates, and then, if we advanced,
Would force us on to scale them by assault—
And 'tis the strongest fortress in the world—
They know I dare not for their sake do this.
My duty is to patch the crumbling state,
Unite, and not divide its double head,
Be regent of the East as of the West.

Euch. Then let me go with Gainas and the troops,
I could watch quietly how matters stood,
And tell you all. It would not look so bad
At Rome or Milan if I went for you,
And I should like to see the capital.

Stil. Impossible—I could not trust the man.

Euch. Oh ! to be thwarted by so mean a wretch !

Stil. Must we, like children, cry for our own way,
Pouting when Heaven denies it, or, like men,
Strive for it with our strength, and leave to God—
The unseen Judge—all willingly, the rest ?
Think of this fair earth's state, where every man
Fights pirate-like for his own will, seizing
Whate'er he can. The very simplest laws,
The scruples welling from his nature's depth,
All conscience of another's fairest rights,
In short, the life-blood of our social world,
Are thrown aside as cumb'ring his freewill,
All forms, the clothing of society,
Cast off, our dearest ties—strong as our strength,
Fix'd as our faith, and fruitful as our hearts—
With all their circling blessings, scarce e'en known ;
Whilst, 'stead of loving sinning citizens,
We find mere savage monstrous broods of men.
You know, perhaps, I've special cause to think
With humble gratefulness upon all this ?

Euch. No, I did not, my lord.

Stil. Your mother, then,
Ne'er told you of my noble ancestry ?

Euch. No; but I've often wished to know, my lord.

Stil. 'T may do you good—at least, 'tis time you knew;
I've ne'er, for my part, wished to hide my birth.
I was a Spanish Vandal chieftain's son,
Heir but to some dread name, some restless clan,
An idle roamer in far hunting grounds,
When I was seized by Theodosius,
A captain then, whilst whetting my young blood
In robber sport against Rome-guarded towns.

Euch. Can it be so indeed?

Stil. You blush, my boy!

Euch. Forgive me! I revere you but the more.

Stil. My boy, I felt you would; but it is him,
The imperial Theodosius—

A master whom 't ennobled me to serve—
You should revere; he trained me as his son,
Kept me beside him, made me rise with him,
And then, when Emperor, gave me my wife—
His blessed sister—to complete his gifts.
Since, I've grown slowly up to what you know.
I am, now that my noble master's gone,
A soldier trusted with the empire's reins.
You see what discipline has done for me?

Euch. I do, indeed; yet 'twas not that alone,
But rather, as I think, your nobler fire
That raised you o'er your brother-soldiers' heads.
But this—'tis such surprise—'tis giving way
At once.

Stil. If you're to be a soldier, boy,

You must not play with time. Good action's prompt—
Accept your loss as soon as 'tis found out.

Euch. Had I the army in my hands, despite
All forms, I'd do what I had come to do.

Stil. We must e'er keep within our proper sphere,
Do what we can within, without, have faith.

Eucherius! each year you'll clearer see
How braver 'tis to face the facts of life
(Whose varied postures God Himself allows,
Through whose sole agency He deigns to act),
And humbly do the little that you can,
Than boldly break through aught that tends to stay
The instant execution of your will,
Flush'd tho' 't may seem with noble purposes.
You'll live to overlook mere brooding dreams,
Whether indignant, sorrowful, or vain,
Whether about your fellows or yourself,
Intoxicating fumes, not solid food,
Which, rebel-like, distract instead of aid.

Euch. I cannot doubt but you are right, my lord—

Re-enter MAXIMUS.

Max. My noble lord, I bring most startling news—
The convoy with provisions from the ships
State that a brig has just arrived from Greece
With certain tidings that the Gothic tribes
Are pillaging their land.

Stil. Impossible!
Three hundred soldiers could keep back their host.

Max. The troops were all withdrawn from every pass ;

They say, by orders of the Eastern Court.

Stil. Is't so, indeed ? The Goths o'er-running Greece !
What can the man be made of to unloose
Whole centuries of woe upon the land ?
I'll see to this myself. Is Gainas here ?

Max. He had not reached his tent when I was there,

But I left word to send him here at once.

Stil. Are those two ruffians executed yet ?

Max. They are, my lord.

Stil. 'Tis well ! I'm glad they are.

This turn is strange, yet it brings good with it.

Euch. We've now fair reason for retreating hence ;
We've now a foe on whom to turn our swords.

Stil. Gainas shall still go on and deal my blow,
Altho' I may not stay for the result—
This but confirms me to retire, yet strike.
This further business shall not set him free,
Tho't carries me away to Greece at once.
These restless tribes shall learn their proper bounds,
As well as this most subtle minister,
Before I reach again this Eastern Court.
Oh ! that one day should scatter peace for years,
Bring in barbarian and civil wars !

[*Exit STILICHO into inner tent. Exeunt MAXIMUS and
EUCHERIUS together.*]

SCENE II.—*Milan—Imperial Palace.—Reception-room
of State.*

1ST SENATOR—CLAUDIAN.

1st Sen. So. By Mars! defeated, but not dispersed!
I thought these naked Goths could ne'er have stood
For any time before the armour'd troops.
These tidings shine not brighter than they should.

Claud. Not bright eno' to darken future news,
But rather whet our appetite for it.
One mouthful at a time, you know, and this,
As first, seems savoury enough, I think.

1st Sen. Nay, I denied it not, was but surprised.

Claud. Dost know, my lord, how Servius is now?

1st Sen. How should I know? But do not talk of him.

Claud. Hast heard, a sick priest has returned from
camp?

He states that most of these barbarians
Bow to our Christian faith. I little knew
'T had spread so far beyond our Empire's bounds.

1st Sen. I care not when it passes on beyond,
And leaves us altogether as before.
You scarcely will believe it, but just now,
The monk Olympius has finally
Refused to gain the Pope's consent for me
To marry my rich cousin Larcia,
Because, forsooth, her widow-mother's joined,
Tho' but for safety's sake, the Arians!
He lets Heroas keep the temples up

On his estate, and net the offerings
Of his poor pagan villagers !

Claud.

But why ?

Does he not pay a priest to proselyte ?

1st Sen. And what ? Scarcely a tythe of what he nets.
Great Jove ! this new faith meddles so. Who cares
To call his slave "poor brother," as the Pope
Enjoins at Rome ? Let women wound themselves,
Or kneel to dirty bones in preference
To beauteous marble vivified, or fast
Instead of feast, as all were wont to do
When our old gods were gods of flowers and fruit,
And not as now of ashes and of dirt.
It is the fashion, and they 'd wish to do 't ;
But why force all us men to do so too ?
And then the arrogance of their meek priests—
Those perfect models of true piety !
Look at their acts. Why, when their followers
Choose from among themselves their pope at Rome,
Their factions amphitheatre the streets,
And tear each other lovingly to death,
Fiercely as starving beasts snatch at their prey.

Claud. Art thou not harder on the faith itself,
My lord, than's fair ? Think you that any faith
Could strip the world of evil, which our God
Himself permits ? All things created weak
Must at some times show forth their weaknesses.
Men's faults should urge them on to lean for help
Upon their God, as scarce-fledged little ones,

Trying to walk, cling to their parents' knees.
That sin's permitted to exist at all
To me seems stranger than that priests should sin.

1st Sen. Well, what is wilder still to me is this,
That good men can exist at all, for whom,
As Christians say, the gods can care. For sport,
They might start sin ; but how can they, who dwell
Amid their glorious palaces on high,
With heavenly views and purest air serene,
Defile their senses with the smelling breath
Of vilest slaves, take pleasure in the worth
Of some poor honest fool, list patiently
To his well-meaning blunderings, care for
His stumbling steps plodding away from vice ?

Claud. 'Tis a paternal love beyond our ken.

1st Sen. Such a paternal love is past our ken.

[*Laughs.*]

Claud. Ah ! may we not, my lord, ourselves appear
But little larger to our towering God ?
What but our best have we to offer Him ?
The daisy flower is meaner than the rose,
Yet both are pleasing to the eye of man,
Tho' oft the one is trodden under foot ;
So to our God may even slaves appear :
For they receive like blessings as ourselves—
Toil with the selfsame limbs with which we lounge,
Feed every moment on the air we scent,
Look on the earth and sky at which we gaze,
Are plagued with like diseases as ourselves,

Have each their hidden heart-born thoughts which hive
The past and fly beyond the sight, as we,—

'Tis worth, not outward rank that moves our God.

1st Sen. E'en slaves may move the gods, but then
the gods

Move not us men! man moves his fellow man,—

Example leads us where mere precepts fail.

Where is your God? Nowhere or everywhere?

'Tis much the same. We have our way—and why?

Why let us fool it at another's court?

Why force not our allegiance, at least,

E'en if too great to let Himself be seen?

An emperor who rules not is but nought.

Facts are the solid things that rule the world.

Claud. Facts are but stillborn bodies that once lived,

That now but take up space,—the schemer's prey,

The rich man's purchase, or the great's demand.

They're helpless in themselves, tho' useful tools.

Example leads because 'tis palpable,

And men are dull and sluggish, caring more

For illustration than for principle,

Blind to the whole, until they feel a part.

Yet facts, I own, are needful as mere clues—

For look but far enough, or close enough,

You sight the Infinite on every side.

1st Sen. They're stronger by themselves than as
mere clues ;

Small acts breed, quick as great ones, habits strong,

That yoke us if they do not hold the reins.

Claud. E'en as the body oft enchains the soul—
But why? Because each petty act, telling
The inner life of him from whom it comes,—
As liv'ried slaves bespeak their master's wealth—
Is freighted with a worth beyond its own.
Besides mere acts are but the body's words,
And oft conceal instead of show the mind,
Are subject slaves unto the body's power,
As all our bodies to the Emperor's.
But the free soul of man, intangible,
Unlimited alike by time or space,
And indestructible, though growing e'er,
Feeding itself with subtle nourishment
Congenial—the essences of all—
Is the true man himself akin to God,
And able to be cared for by His love
And loved, when freed from the gross body's grasp—
When the great Judge, the time of trial o'er,
Appears Himself, in all His majesty—
Makes seen His sov'reign purpose to all souls.

1st Sen. Ah, well! I doubt not but you're right,
you have
Your fortune to pick up, I mine to spend :
And yet, I've heard you differ with the priests?
You see life as a moral hot-bed, but
Forgive me if I do not see it so.

Claud. But isn't not so, my lord? What have the
gods
Placed in the power of every one to gain,

But simple goodness? Can all men be rich,
Learned, or great; but may not all be good?
And does not worth alone bring happiness?
Our separate lives, islanded as they are
Within the lake of time, are granted us
To climb in loyal faith the narrow pass,
Drained by the infernal gulph, to heaven.
Else, where's the meaning of our heaped-up graves,
Those mould-wreaths fresh mown by the scythe of
Death,
Which we as Christians lay around our church?
What else means Nature's freshened scenery?
What other hymn can all the generations voice,
If all their scraping cries of joy and woe
Should herald in no perfect concert-choir?

Enter 2ND SENATOR.

2nd Sen. Good morn! I see Lampadius is gone?
It is so late I almost feared he was,
Although I thought I saw his chariot,
And yours, outside.

1st Sen. You did.

2nd Sen. What, lent it then?

1st Sen. He is himself within in converse with
Her grace the royal aunt. Hast heard, my lord,
Fresh details of the news?

2nd Sen. Not I, indeed—
The news to Pluto!—all talk of the news.
Stilicho was in chase, on unfair terms,

Of the half-naked enemy, whom he
Had worsted and deprived of all his spoil—
That's all. The savages would use their legs !

Claud. Would that he could undo, and so avenge
Their acts, replace, as well as take, their spoil.

2nd Sen. There are no fellows in the army now ;
How could I possibly have heard more news ?
There's no one here except Lampadius ?

1st Sen. And our unworthy selves.

2nd Sen. So good so far.
I wanted a few words with him alone.

1st Sen. So ? Well, he cannot be much longer
then,
I've waited here myself to go with him
To morning's bath.

Claud. Farewell, most worthy lords.

1st Sen. Farewell, Claudian, we shall meet to-night
Before the table of Lampadius ?

Claud. Not so, he never yet has honoured me.

[*Exit CLAUD.*]

2nd Sen. How comes that fellow here ? How black
he looked.

1st Sen. He's courting favour here, as singing-bird
To our all-powerful general, and more,
He's full in favour with her royal grace,
Was toasted too the other night, I heard.
So that we must, as yet, make much of him.
Besides he's fresh—feels interest in things,
Tho' he expects us all to do the same.

He's just been boring me with arguments
On school-slip lessons in morality.

2nd Sen. What ! bored *you* talking of philosophy ?

1st Sen. He's such a moody, melancholy owl—

2nd Sen. Moody ? No wonder ! why, he's half a saint.

[*They laugh.*]

1st Sen. And yet somehow he seems a happy man.

2nd Sen. Thinks himself one, you mean ?

1st Sen. Nay, then he is !

Would the fool was a less conceited one !

'Twas not long since that he astonished us,
When at my house amid my other guests,
By gathering fruit, for others and himself,
From off my garden walls, before the feast ;
And then, because my mistress frowned on him,
Sat in his place refusing everything
But bread and simplest meat ; naught tempted him,
Although at last she tried the choicest things ;
But, no ! all things he'd steadily refuse,
With haughty triumph masked in courteous smiles.

2nd Sen. The fellow dresses passably enough—
One of the baseborn plebs ? 'Tis sad for him
He can't e'en boast a beggar'd noble sire.

1st Sen. Nor e'en a dead old Cræsus' dirty shoes.

2nd Sen. Can fiddle well ?

1st Sen. He cannot scrape a note,
But swears he loves to list, e'en to the worst.

2nd Sen. I wonder not Lampadius forbears
To introduce him at his choice-filled board.

1st Sen. What a long interview they're having there !

2nd Sen. I'm glad I came so late—we're all alone—
I say (a secret which you're not to hear),
Dost think her royal grace can be annoyed
At the surpassing banquets he provides,
Which so outvie the best that she e'er gives ?

1st Sen. A thought—By all the gods you may be right—
I'd stuffed my brain with fancies of all kinds,
But none smell half so soundly as this does.

2nd Sen. Mind you, don't dream that I suggested this ?

1st Sen. My worthy lord !

2nd Sen. Well, well.

1st Sen. Lampadius

Oft goes too far in very many ways.
He is too grand, too strong ; for, after all,
He is but one of us. You know, at times,
He treats us as he would his puling brats—
By Jove, he does !

2nd Sen. Perhaps—but then his wealth ?

1st Sen. 'Tis not his wealth so much—look at his
luck !

Why, getting Harcias alone gives him
The game.

2nd Sen. It does ; the man has wondrous power.

1st Sen. Always surprises one with something fresh !

2nd Sen. His father, ay and his, too, did the same.

1st Sen. So, so ! I'd heard not that ; he travelled
much, I knew.

2nd Sen. Has scraped the world's extremities,

And so he ought—the money that he coins—
By all the gods !

1st Sen. He must be wondrous rich.

2nd Sen. Rich ! ay, Jew-rich — look at the sums
he lends !

Why, my own cook gave him 4,000 crowns
For liberty to serve a single year,
With some three others, under him ; and more,
The money was well spent, howe'er 'twas got,
By Jove, it was !

1st Sen. So, hush ! they're coming here.

2nd Sen. Mind that we must not stay, we are so late.

Enter SERENA and LAMPADIUS by another door.

Ser. Fair greeting to you both, this happy morn.

2nd Sen. Your grace's beauty indexes your health,
And shines an answer to my humble prayer.

1st Sen. Your gracious glance outrides your gracious
voice,

And tells your health, as perfume does a flower's.

Ser. My lords, you should reserve all flattery
Till some sad news, at least, should cast its shade.

1st Sen. All things must fade amid this morn's
bright light.

2nd Sen. We've ventured, e'en thus late, to bear
your grace

The testimony of our humble joy.

Ser. I thank you for your courtesy, my lords.

Lam. I must away—Your noble grace, farewell ;

I shall retain a life-long gratitude
For your most treasured kindness.

Ser.

Farewell.

Lam. My friends, adieu ; I must away at once.

2nd Sen. I'll join you now, and save her royal grace
The further burden of my company.

[*Exit LAMPADIUS.*

1st Sen. [*Aside.*] Press him not now, or he'll avoid
us both.

2nd Sen. [*Aside.*] We must away : I'll see him at
the baths.

Both Sens. I fear we're trespassing upon your time ?
Farewell, your royal grace.

Ser.

Farewell, my lords.

[*Exeunt Senators.*

They think, too, that the news is not so good !
Well, well ; but now about dear Lucia.
She cannot now be long, I will wait here
And catch her ere she's closeted alone.
I am quite curious to see her blush.
She does it guilelessly as yet. 'Tis odd
How little she has learned of life whilst here.
I'd wager much 'twill take her by surprise !
It is her step—dear Lucia, come in.

Enter LUCIA by same door as SERENA entered.

Well, now I've some fresh news to tell you of,
News that relates most nearly to yourself.
Nay, do not hesitate, this room's now ours ;

No one will interrupt or hear us here.
Well, Lucia, 'tis something I've myself
Foreseen—something which doubtless you can guess.
The senator, Lampadius, came here,
When nearly all had left, begging a word
With me alone ; on granting it, he gave
The general congratulations at
The joyful news of war, and then warm praise
Of my dear lord ; at last, he led me round
To you, plied me with feeling questions, then
Bestowed on you some gentle compliments,
Spoke of th' enticing bloom of happy youth
Cov'ring the native graces of your mind,
Your lone position, and your plenteous wealth—
Wealth that lay near to his : and, finally,
Dear Lucia, expressed his earnest hope
That I and my dear lord would grant to him
Such beauty to adorn his festive board,
And yield you to a husband's fondest care.

Luc. Oh, say not so ! spare me but this, and I
In all things else will strive to do your will.
My dearest lady, say you'll spare me this ?
I've heard too oft his subtle compliments.
I tremble at the man—quite shrink beneath
His piercing eye—its restless darkness blights
My little energy. When last we met,
He pierced me with a glance so questioning,
As gaolers scan a leaving visitor :
I scarce knew where I was.

Ser.

Why, Lucia !

You'll soon live thro' that dread—a cavern's gloom
Frights but at first, and then protects from fright.

I e'en can recollect the time when I
Looked up half-fearful at the noble form,
And trembled at the frown, of Stilicho,
Altho' no snowy mountain's peak, all bathed
In rosy morning light, could tend'rer be.
Lampadius heads well a family
Both old and great, is gazed at as a power
By all our nobles, and his intellect,
Matured in Greece, exceeds all theirs, as far,
As his broad countries do ; and, more than all,
He scatters like a prince his clustered wealth
In open-hearted hospitality.

Luc. Oh ! let there be no doubt—would that I had
Foreseen at all this startling step of his ;
I ought not to have kept the manuscript
He gave me some days back. He lent it me
('Twas Ambrose fresh-translated Holy Writ),
To copy, hearing I had wanted it ;
And when I urged him to receive it back,
He said he'd meant it as a gift, and begged
I'd not insult him by rejecting it :
And so, most foolishly, I keep it—yet—
Oh ! I have brought this all upon myself !

Ser. You did quite right, he cared not for the book,
But used it as a bait to play with you.
You swallowed line and all, disarming him—

No ! you must think—what I fear most, is this,
That he's, if anything, too old for you ;
But you must weigh full well his present suit—
You know not yet how difficult 'twill be
To find another whom you would prefer,
Whose wealth and station would half match with yours.
Take time ; your word will be a final one,
He'd never risk to be rejected twice ;
See that your mind confirms your hasty wish,
Ere you shut out for aye a station where
Your worth would have full scope to prove itself.

Luc. No, no, no, no, oh ! no, oh ! gracious God !

[*Falls on her knees.*]

O my dear lady, tempt me not indeed ;
Give me your help in my perplexity.

Ser. My dearest child ! what is't that frights you so ?

Luc. Would that I were once more closed from the
world

Within my convent walls in Africa—
I ne'er felt lonely there—I am not fit,
I never could endure, to be his wife—
Oh ! think upon that utter solitude,
When all alone within a palace large,
No one around within the journey of
A week but my own slaves, I had to turn
For sympathy in such dread state towards
A bosom'd husband whom I could not love !
Such my retreat from out the city's glare,
Where everybody's eyes I feel on me,

And I must live, in thought and word and deed,
Not only with them all, but as they wish.

Dear lady ! tell me not to leave your home :

I am an orphan, do not cast me out !

Ser. Nay, child, I'll force you not for any one ;
This home, dear Lucia, is always yours.

Dost think that I would sooner have from you
The borrowed smile that every hostess gives
Along with all her hospitality,

When I perchance might see you at some feast,
Than the close daily love you give me here ?

I knew not, dear, your feelings were so strong,
Tho' I expected you would greet the news
With more of fear than joy ; but still I thought
You'd yield yourself, that 'twould be best you did.

Dear Lucia, fear not Lampadius ;

I told him he must gain my lord's consent,

Which he will shortly haste to do himself :

We'll be before him. But, why sorrow still ?

Few would but joy at such a compliment.

Luc. My heart well thanks you if my lips are mute,
And you'll forgive my slighting your advice ?
I thought when he was courting you so much
It could not be for me.

Ser. So, so ! at last
You show yourself a woman, Lucia ?

SCENE III.—*An open Road near Epirus—Amphitheatre in distance, and Tents, Soldiers, &c.*

LAMPADIUS meeting CLAUDIAN.

Lam. Ah ! Claudian !

Claud. My lord Lampadius !

Lam. Well met, indeed, at last. Had I foreknown
The many vexed delays I should have had
In my short, dreary, solitary voyage,
I would have even started unprepared
With you.

Claud. Your lordship honours me too much—
I knew not that you thought of coming here ?

Lam. 'Tis a most broiling day for one to walk.
I sent my baggage by my slaves, and thought
To get a horse if not a chariot,
But, Styx ! I've had to sweat it out on foot.
You have arrived some time ?

Claud. About three weeks,
My lord ; I trust you do not bring bad news ?

Lam. No, oh ! no. I've arrived too late to see
The games which have, I hear, been held—doubtless
In celebration of some victory ?

Claud. You have indeed arrived too late, my lord,
To see the games, but not the victory—
'Tis the full ripen'd hour, just ere the fruit
Drops in our outstretched hands.

Lam. It is too bad
To lose the games and suffer what I have

Because a timid pilot feared the winds—
I had forsooth arrived too late—the fool !
And then to lecture me for keeping him—
If I e'er catch him he shall suffer too ;
These pilots should be called “ the water mules.”
The place seems stranger than I thought it would.

Claud. I had forgot your lordship had been here.

Lam. How very young youth seems when it is past,
Or nearly so, for brimming hearts keep youth ?

Claud. Most true, indeed, all buoyant hearts are
young.

Would you had been in time to see the games,
For they were stirring, free from useless pomp,
Rivalling the glorious days of old
In earnestly contested victory,
Whose laurel crowns great Stilicho himself
Bestowed, amid the gathered throng's applause.
He even entered midst the combatants,
Vanquishing an oft-declared conqueror.

Lam. The general himself entered the games ?
That is most new, by Jove ! Why, Claudian,
Had any other told me but yourself,
I should have kicked it as a barefaced hoax.
How fresh all seems away from Italy !
What would be said were it but known in Rome ?
Where is he now ? How have his arms progressed ?

Claud. I saw my noble patron not long since
Enter his tent to see fresh messengers
Who reached him from the lines. Hast heard, my lord,

He met the enemy near Thebes, and thence
Drove him in headlong route? Well, Alaric,
The subtle leader of their host, used well
Those mountain passes which were given him,
By foulest treachery, when first he came,
And being reinforced by some fresh hordes,
Our prudent general put forth his skill
To save his soldiers' lives, whilst compassing
The total wreck of the fierce Gothic force.
Avoiding onset he imprisoned them
In well-dug lines they could not force, and then
Diverted from their reach the river's bed,
And fortified the sunken road it left.
This was completed just as I got here,
And so, to keep alive the soldier's fire
Amidst the dull delays of this slow siege,
He well revived these long-forgotten games.
I should not wonder if these messengers
Bring word the enemy has yielded to our arms
To 'scape fell Hunger's hourly gnaw; at least
I know the noble Stilicho proceeds
Up to the lines forthwith. I go there now.

Lam. You're staying here the better to describe
Your noble patron's present feats of arms?

Claud. Partly. Would I could sing them well enough!
No praise of mine can e'er sketch his renown,
He is all kindness and all nobleness.
But everybody seems so hearty here!

Lam. It is the place, I feel already touched—

Here strides the noble Stilicho himself
Despite his dress a perfect general.

Claud. 'Tis he indeed. I must not stay, farewell,
My lord.

Lam. Farewell!

[*Exit* CLAUDIAN.]

Enter STILICHO.

Stil. Ah! welcome, my good lord!
How fared his majesty the emperor
And my dear lady when you left?

Lam. All well
As you could wish, most noble lord. I hear
I'm still in time to be a witness of
Your final stroke of victory?

Stil. You'll find
Within my tent such poor refreshment as
An army's camp allows. I'm called away
Myself by a sad message from the lines,
Bearing me news so bad t'can scarce be true.
You must forgive my leaving you, just now—
I think you'd better follow with the troops.

Lam. A general beyond most other men
Must meet annoyances mid his rough life.
Think nought, my noble lord, of leaving me
Alone, my lengthened journey's wearied me.

Stil. This news is too provoking to annoy.
The wound, if one at all, 's to deep to smart.

Lam. The captain left in charge has proved himself
Inadequate?

Stil. Would he'd had worth enough

To be but worthless : but we'll talk not of it.
I'm sorry that you've journeyed here so far,
As I shall tell my lady when I write.

Lam. Your lordship is too thoughtful for my good;
The journey has in fact improved my health.
Your urgency will plead for mine, if I
Press on, at once, the suit I've come about.
I think her royal grace, your lady, has,
Through letters sent by Claudian, informed
You of my suit, the worthy object which
Urged me to risk the danger of my voyage
And journey here—and has, I trust, vouchsafed
Her kind approval of my warm desire.
Amidst the swarming cares which now o'errun
The narrow limits of your precious time,
The transference of one (altho' it scarce,
Perchance, was felt) may cause some slight relief.
With me your lovely ward shall ever find
Aught that she can desire, aught that my wealth
Or station can procure.

Stil. I fear, my lord,
I cannot now discuss so nice a point.
My heart and head are brimming o'er with war.

Lam. Pardon my urgency, my noble lord,
But while I'm in your camp I feel that I'm
A straggler in your way. I trust, indeed,
My present suit demands but little thought,
Is eloquent without an advocate.
Your noble lordship knows full well my wealth

And hers, how fairly matched they are, how well
They jointly would sustain the rank I give.
You know, I scarcely need allude to this,
The loyalty I bear the emperor
And you ; in proof of which, I may now add,
It would not be my wish to touch her wealth
So long as you will kindly condescend
To hold it for me, as you do for her.

Stil. My lord, I thank you for your courtesy ;
I really must, as I have said, defer
The subject of your suit.

Lam. Meets it, my lord,
So little favour in your eyes ? Delay
Sounds ever coldly to a lover's ears.

Stil. Nay, then, I'll be open ; my ward herself
Declines the honour you've proposed for her.

Lam. My noble lord, 'tis strange I heard not this !
Your royal lady hinted not a word—
Nay, suffered me to rest upon my hopes.
[A short pause] Howe'er, I will at once return and press
My suit to the fair maid herself—'t may be,
I have not been attentive as I ought.
Back'd with your lordship's gracious countenance,
I shall not tremble at a hard result.

Stil. My lord, whilst I am here—away from her,
I cannot aid you—I'll be plain ; I'm told
That Lucia, as ladies will at times,
Has hatched a curious fancy in her brain,
Which almost curdles fear at your approach.

You see, therefore, 'twould be more prudent if
You ceased your suit just now; let some few months
Pass on without your seeing her, and she—
Left to herself—may wish you back; ere when,
Perhaps, you may have looked with other eyes.

Lam. I thank your noble lordship for the hint;
It sounds most grateful to my startled ears.

Stil. Nay, take your course, my lord, as I have
mine;
Who knows? You may succeed, as others have,
In stealing victory from out defeat.

Lam. I thank your noble lordship for the leave—

Stil. Here comes my horse. I must be hence. Fare-
well!

Enter Groom, with Horse.

Lam. You'll let me trouble you some other time,
When less engrossed, my lord?

Stil. Why, why,
My lord? [*To Groom*] You'll follow after with the
rest.

[*Exeunt STILICHO and Groom.*]

Lam. The proudest tree, full-leaved by hopeful spring,
Struck down by lightning's not more scared than I.
Have I been blind, blind as a blind man's eye,
And mad, drunk with my own fond dreams?—or, Jove!
Am I a fool, a simple-minded fool? [*Laughs.*]
To be defeated by a giggling girl!

D

I am too old, perchance ; not fop enough,
Clothed in the Senate's robes ; your women's eyes
Glance but at the trimmings. The silly jest,
The laughing eye, and giddy compliment,
Of some young lusty fool will ever please ;
A skin-deep mind but feels a tickler's touch.
They want a page to fawn on every look,
Anticipate each wish, grin at their fun,
Look awful at their frown ; they either fawn
Themselves or make you fawn. Were Socrates
To talk to them, they'd see but his broad nose ;
They'd crouch before a Cato's awing glance,
And when alone gibe at his Goth-like hair.
Why, e'en great Cæsar's world-wide laurel crown
Would not withdraw their prying eyes from off
The baldness of the jewel which it set.
'T would seem I can't be virtuous when I would.
Perhaps she's scar'd at Arca's biting jests,
Or drunk the poison'd malice of her tongue—
The one's as timid as the other's fierce,
And envy's hatred hesitates at nought.
You poor weak fool, you've dealt a lasting wound !
You little know my passion's burning strength,
Which urges me to tear you from them all,
And claim you, as you yet shall be, my own.
When your young blood dries up, and curdles sour,
And you look round for some companionship
To break your stagnant loneliness, may you
Be left alone to curse, as I am now—

Ay, I, who could have been so kind to you,
Have loved you as fierce Arca once loved me !

Officers and Men pass by.

What means this sudden stir about the place ?
These cursed trumpeters seem mocking me.
Would the sky's face would thunder itself black !
What have I to do ?—what ? Or where to go ?
My long, strange journey here to lead to this !
My prize withdrawn, myself sent back again.
Back to my old, old life—to my dear friends !
What though I laugh away their jokes, ignore
The mock compassion they may show, and scorn
The coldness of the fawning courtiers ?
The old dull round—duller away from Court—
Comes back once more, and I am objectless.
To be so duped, too, by her royal grace—
A woman whom I've courted all my life,
And never asked a favour from before—
Caressed, and thrown aside as a pet dog !
Nay, trapped to this far solitude, away
From all companionship, where my rank's nought,
My wealth a burden, and myself unknown.
O self-deceiving love, I'll stamp you down !
Two women in their league to master me !

Enter Officer.

Off. Thou hast not heard the news that's just arrived ?
The flock of maddened Goths have sallied forth

In starv'd despair against our lessened troops,
And forced the lines; all men are ordered hence—
You'd best, for safety's sake, join in with us.

[*Passes on.*]

Lam. He talked of some sad message from the lines !
How came he here ? A Roman general
To leave his army 'fore the enemy,
And go with all his staff to distant games,
As though he were an idle citizen,
To vaunt his body's strength before his troops,
And glory in surpassing one of them,
As though he were a serjeant of a band,
Or, as he looked, chief of some savage tribe !
And this big-handed blunderer denies
His ward to me, a senator, the head
Of th' Anician family. He who
In former days at my own father's board
(Ere he'd allied himself with royalty,
And when he scarce could speak our mother tongue),
Essayed his first oration in my praise;
And trusted, as I well can recollect,
That I might live long to receive the love,
Respect, and honour, all paid to my sire;
And afterwards apologized to me
Because a word mis-used had raised a laugh !
And this so puffed-up Goth, this general,
Is, at a girl's coy whim, to root away
My passion's seedling ripening into bud,
And send me back to Rome a laughing-stock !

Oh ! that my life's devotion might achieve
The tardy conquest of some sweet revenge.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV. — *Imperial Palace, Milan — Lady Serena's apartments.*

Ser. I've lived some years in this e'er-changing world,
And tried, by looking back as well as round,
To be prepared for aught that could arrive,
But uselessly—provide for what I will
The future e'er surprises me with what
No diligence of forethought could have guessed ;
Anticipate sad evil as I may
It comes in its own way at last.
I've felt a dim foreboding some time back,
But ne'er expected such o'erwhelming news ;
A change so black and sudden as to blind,
At the first glance, my unaccustomed eyes.
Who could have ever guessed that Alaric
Should have surprised a slothful watch of ours,
And slipped away with all his force by night ?

Claud. Right through the centre of our strongest
lines !

Ser. My lord not being there. What will he do ?
Still carry on the war ? And then the news
From th' Eastern Court is sadder far, indeed.
I should not so much have wondered at th' aid

They've given Alaric, though making him
Prefect of Illyria, is most rash
(As placing in his reach both arms and gold);
But to declare my noble Stilicho—
Rome's consul and the empire's guardian—
A public enemy, to confiscate
The property he has within their State,
Is boldest insult not to be atoned.

Claud. Can it indeed be so? I knew not this.
Aught less, I scarcely should have wondered at,
When a vile eunuch's their chief minister.

Ser. It seems almost too shocking to be true,
And all to happen in so short a time.
You are a most unhappy messenger.
Dost know the details of this sudden change?

Claud. The Eastern troops, which your most noble
lord
Pursuant to the royal wish, sent on
With Gainas, when they reached the capital,
Broke out in riot at a large review
Against Rufinus, the bad and hated
Minister of Greece (in the presence of
The Emperor himself), and murdered him.
This tragedy was all that we could learn,
Except its moral, that the chamberlain,
A eunuch, filled at once the empty place.

Ser. A eunuch there—and here, my noble lord!

Claud. A monstrous birth for e'en such lawlessness.

Ser. I cannot realize it all e'en now.

Claud. I fear the Emperor will be much shocked.

Ser. As he can be with aught! He'll soon be here
To glean the news. What can I make of it?
It has not one good point. You'll spread it not.

Claud. Your royal grace——

Ser. Claudian, hast seen
Lampadius since he left? Where is he?

Claud. We travelled back together from the camp,
But though he talked on many topics, oft,
'Twas coldly, formally—mere surface talk.
I left him on his way to Rome, coolly,
Clothed in the haughtiness he first had dropped.
At times he was more full of levity
Than any noble I have ever met;
And then I thought his heart sobbed inwardly
As water wells up in the pierced ice.

Ser. Had anything occurred to cause the thought?

Claud. I fancied he had had some grievous loss.
Some ship, perchance, returning from his shores
Laden with treasures that he wanted much,
And sea-devoured, whilst he was waiting for 't.
He scarce would notice nature's grandest shows,
And seemed to shun me as a plague-struck man.
So long will wealth chafe at the meanest check!
After his kindness when he greeted me,
And knowing your most gracious care for him,
I was most thoughtful not to tire him out,
And showed him more respect than I should here,
Although he seemed to scowl on me the more.

Ser. And did he say it was a ship he'd lost ?

Claud. 'Tis but a guess, although a likely one ;
And yet, when starting from a reverie,
I now remember that I heard him say—
“ 'Tis not her loss that so enrages me.”
And then he called all pilots “ water mules.”

Ser. You're oft so very sure of a surmise,
Good Claudian ?

Claud. I fear I am, your grace,
I seldom can restrain myself enough,
To follow ploughman-like the trail of facts
As closely as I should ; but, like a child,
Run fancifully bounding on in front
And wonder—when I find I'm left alone.

Ser. I pity him more than I thought I should,
And shall, I doubt not, miss his biting wit
As all our nobles will his constant feasts—
Him much, but Harcias, his cook, much more.

[*Laughs.*]

Howe'er they'll feel themselves relieved, although
They'll own it not. Well ! well ! 'twas better there.
I never shall regret the course I took,
Although I know he never will forgive 't,
As once he told me that he ne'er forgot.

Claud. But does he not return ?

Ser. How can I know ?
Hark ! that's the Emperor's approach !
Name it to no one that Lampadius
Was in the camp from me, good Claudian.

Claud. To no one, as you wish me not. Farewell,
Your royal grace.

Ser. I'll see you soon again
About all this, when I can spare more time.
Farewell !

Claud. Till then, your royal grace, farewell.

[*Exit CLAUDIAN.*]

Ser. I must be careful till I see my way.
He must not hear that Alaric escaped
Through the neglect of Stilicho's own troops,
Or 'twould be known by all his retinue,
And bruited by our slaves about the town
That my dear lord had suffered vile defeat.

Enter EMPEROR, with rabbit in arms.

Emp. My noble aunt, good day ! My pet and I
Are come as you desired to hear the news.
I fear I ne'er shall be a general.
I don't like it. My men again to-day,
I don't know how, but order as I would,
Got mixed together and their lines destroyed,
And some were hurt by others' javelins.
I've talked it o'er with Count Heracian,
And think we want more sergeants than we have ;
The present few scarce even know their men.

Ser. I'm sorry that your Majesty's review
So little satisfied your royal mind.
Count Heracian shall be spoken to,
Although I fear good sergeants may be rare.

But now to turn to other weightier things;
This day's despatch brings tidings so unwished,
So strange, and all unlooked for, that I thought
Your Majesty should hear them privately.
I sorrow much to be obliged to say
Your royal brother has thought fit to take
A eunuch for his empire's minister;
The first-fruits of which choice, yet known, are these—
An insult offer'd to your guardian,
Backed by a subtle blow against your State;
Fierce Alaric, whilst crouching from my lord,
Not only has been rescued from his hand,
But made the Prefect of Illyria—
The province of their empire nearest yours;
Whilst the most noble Stilicho has been
Declared a public traitor to their State!

Emp. Has he, indeed? What can my brother mean?

Ser. 'Tis this, your Majesty, we wish to know
How he's been so misled?

Emp. He couldn't know
The acts which were committed in his name.
What shall I do? How shall I let him know?

Ser. We cannot let him know; all intercourse
Between our empires now must cease; insults
So bare to all the world wellnigh provoke
War, fatal to the interests of both.
The future, too, appears all hazardous;
'Tis most perplexing to pursue a way
Safely, 'longside a hidden enemy.

Who can e'er trust a eunuch minister,
Fresh made?—or reckon on the course he'll take?
We must await my noble lord's return.

Emp. Then Stilicho will soon be here again?

Ser. I know not; but should think, ere long, he would.
At least I trust the Gothic war is o'er.
Henceforth, I think, 't should be our policy
To ward off war with Alaric's fierce tribes:
There's small advantage in defeating them,
They've nought to lose, and are too numerous
To slay, and we've no legions now to spare;
And if we wait till some barbarian chief,
Of equal power, springs up, we can back both.

Emp. I'm glad that Stilicho will soon be here:
I need not then command at our reviews.

Ser. Your Majesty forgets you need not now,
Save when you choose, command. You recollect
You thought 'twas fit that as your years increased
You should see the legionaries more;
Get them accustomed to obey your voice,
As well as shout allegiance to your name.
They are, as 'twere, the throne on which you sit,
The only subjects you must not displease.

Emp. [*Playing with rabbit.*] I do not care at all to
manage them.

I'm always happy with my pets alone,
And never care to mix with your affairs.

Ser. 'Tis so, indeed, and I'm most grateful for it.
'Tis possible my lord may be, just now,

Unable to attend your Majesty :
I had forgotten he and all his troops
Might be required to watch your boundary line
Northwards in Rhætia. The friendly chiefs
Report a monster host assembled there,
Under a German named Rhadasius.
'Twould seem, indeed, that the great God allows
The empire to be threatened on all sides.
Fierce Alaric's now settled in the East ;
This German host frowns on us from the North ;
And Egypt, in the South, rebellious seems,
As if incited by the Eastern State.
Should it indeed prove so, Rome's corn supply
Will cease; and how the people will be fed
He only knows. Your Majesty's aware
Your capital's provisions come from thence ?

Emp. No : I was not. I thought all came from Gaul.

Ser. Your own provisions do, but theirs do not.

Emp. Why are they fetched so far across the sea ?

I thought that only fish were brought from thence.

Ser. We're forced, your Majesty, to bring it thence.
Near all the lands of Italy lie waste—
Belong, in fact, to two great families,
And scarce supply with food the scattered slaves
Who labour for their lords in villages,
And have to manufacture all his wants,
Not cultivate his endless tracts of land,
Whose produce would be wasted—for the lords
Can't turn themselves to farmer citizens,

And sell their wares. Howe'er, as Italy
Does not supply itself with corn, I've sent,
Pursuant to my lord's advice, to Gaul
And Spain.

Emp. I heard not of all this; my lords
Talked but of Stilicho's great victories!
I knew not any dared to threaten us.
Dost really think that there is aught to fear?

Ser. To fear? Oh, no! but to arouse our care.
I would not now have vexed your royal ears,
But that I wished to show you, by degrees,
Some of the cares an empire's rule creates—
Cares which a noble spirit yearns to bear.

Emp. I don't think I shall ever wish for them.

Ser. As yet your Majesty's not strong enough
To bear such heavy harness on your back,
But, when slow time has seasoned you, you'll find
Your daily duties growing part of you.

Emp. I like my rabbits better than the lords

[*Fondles rabbit.*]

Whose names they have. The courtiers tire me so.

Ser. Your Majesty will recollect you liked,
A short time back, the fish who knew your voice.
'Tis rabbits now, soon 'twill be dogs, you like;
Then you'll prefer swift horses to your dogs,
As all the nobles do; and then at last
They will not satisfy your royal mind,
And you will turn to armies and the State.

Emp. I hate the troops more than the courtiers.

They make me giddy, make my head ache, too.
I cannot manage them; I can't, indeed.

Ser. Your Majesty should not o'ertax your strength.

Emp. I told Heraclian I'd rather not.

You've nothing more, my aunt, you want me for?

Ser. Nothing, your Majesty. Perhaps this news
Had better not be talked about as yet.

Emp. I will not talk of it to any one.
Good day, my noble aunt.

Ser. Your pages are
Outside?

Emp. They are.

Ser. Farewell, your Majesty.

[*Exit* EMPEROR.]

Would that he had more life and energy,
And loved his subjects as he does his pets.
I know not what is best for him to do.
He cannot, as my Stilicho once said,
Join other youths in games, as our boy did.
What would be said? Who ever heard of it?
He would not wish to do 't himself. Besides
All is not loss, he might get violent,
As his great father was—and awkward, too.
Well! well! I'll comfort Lucia, dear girl.

[*Exit* SERENA.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Imperial Palace at Milan. EMPEROR's State Apartment's. EMPEROR sitting in state, surrounded by Count HERACLIAN and other Courtiers. At his back stand several Pages, and by his side, on a stand, is a pet lap-dog asleep. Various Nobles enter, and are introduced by the Chamberlain—amongst others, MARCIUS.*

Emp. Why, Marcius, we didn't see you at
The games. We thought all loyal subjects then
Would join with us in celebration of
A victory so gloriously complete.

Mar. Oh! most divine Honorius, thy thought
Did justice to thy slave; no friendly tie,
No call from any of my family,
No great advantage to myself, could e'er
Have kept me from assembling with the rest,
In honour of thy glorious victory.

Emp. And Stilicho's.

Mar. He was the instrument,
Your Majesty the high directing power.

Emp. Howe'er 'twas gained, it saved our purple robes.
A Courtier. And showed to all the world that barbarous hosts,
Howe'er numerous, break up before
Thy mighty State, as clouds against a mount.

Another Courtier. So long as one of all that German gang—

All helpless, as are shoals of fish on shore—
Ekes out his wretched life of slavery,
So long thy people must applaud thy might
In conquering the wild Rhadasius.

Mar. Your Majesty will graciously forgive
The wrong thy servant innocently did
In not attending at the public games?
That wrong he could not help. He strives to find
Contentment that such wrong avoided worse.

Emp. My lord, you speak in riddles. You look pale.

Mar. Your Majesty's e'er kind. I'm not a Mars.
I will withdraw with your most gracious leave.
I could not longer stay from hastening here
To gain thy pardon for my forced neglect,
But ere your Majesty's next Court draws near,
I hope to hector it with any lord.

Emp. Let us not see you here again so pale.

[*Exit MARCIUS.*]

He scarce can walk. Why did he dare come here?

Courtiers. 'Tis monstrous that he should attend whilst weak.

Her. Your Majesty may well say so,—might well
Forbid his paying court again. 'Twas most
Imprudent, though just like his youthful haste,
Staking his all to gain some paltry step
He could not wait for; yet 'tis fair to add,
In explanation, that when first he came,

Some hours ago, before your Majesty
Had graced this noble hall, he looked not thus.
I noticed him as I passed back again,
Grow pale, and move about as though fatigued,
And hinted he had better come next Court;
Mentioned the fears that he might stir in us,
Both for ourselves and for your Majesty.
As well I might have urged him when asleep:
He is so restless at his solitude,
Made greater by his brother's leaving him,
Instead of being grateful that he's left.

Emp. Left—for where?

Her. Pardon me, your Majesty,
My blunderings. Something happened to him——

Emp. We understand. Has he no relatives?

Her. My lady is his sister; but the rule—
Practised by all for safety against risk—
That no one in such cases should be seen
Until they'd visited your Majesty,
Enforced her, haply for her children's sake
And mine, to fly from dangers she'd have met,
Had she at his request attended him.

Emp. We doubt not she was right. We did not know,
Nor do we care to know, how ill he was.

A Courtier. The rule's most merciful, your Majesty,
And for your safety's sake is aye enforced.

Another Courtier. The graceful consort of the noble
Count

O'ercame a sister's with a mother's love.

E

Emp. Have any other lords to make their court ?

Enter a Young Nobleman.

Nobleman. I bring strange rumours to your Majesty.

'Tis commonly reported in the town

That Alaric, when he'd been crowned as King,

Drunk with the adulation of his chiefs,

Led all his hordes across thy boundary ;

And they're now swarming o'er thy provinces.

A Courtier. Such foolish tales need only to be told
To pass as thinnest vapours into air.

Another Courtier. A joke's high treason 'gainst his
Majesty.

Nobleman. 'Tis no belief of mine, your Majesty ;
I've just met Claudian whilst on his way
To see the royal aunt, and learn'd from him,
Not only that he'd heard it all himself,
But also that he fear'd it was quite true.

Another Courtier. Mere fancy's dreams, showing the
frightened state
Of those who conjured them. In frosty air
Our very breath shows ghostlike till it melts.

Young Nobleman. But who could dare invent a tale
like this,
So strange, so monstrous, so unlikely too ?

Emp. But why does Claudian believe it true ?
The times are dangerous and full of strife
We cannot tell what may not happen now.

A Courtier. 'Tis true, your Majesty, none can indeed.

Her. Your gracious Majesty will find that tales,

Monstrous as this, oft rise from smallest facts,
As empty mists from out a narrow stream
Whose breath spreads o'er the meadow grass with bloom,
And hides from distant gaze the stream itself.
Perchance, amidst the boisterous revellings
Of all the drunken cloutish Gothic tribes
On Alaric's mock coronation day,
Some random chief more lawless than the rest
Broke o'er the narrow boundary to rob
Some neighbouring village, whose inhabitants—
Scared from their senses—raised the wild alarm
That half the Gothic host was at their heels;
Such wondrous news would waste not as it went,
But, as some travelling lord by country clowns
Is bow'd to and proclaimed a mighty prince,
So such report would strike all hearts with awe;
Each timid fool bellowing out for aid
Would magnify the tale to fit his fears,
Till Alaric, at last, was hounding on his hosts
And threatening to o'errun e'en Italy.

A Courtier. I heard these silly tales some three days
back,

But never ventured to expose myself
To galling ridicule by telling them,
As likely rumours, to your Majesty.

A Courtier [aside.] Were they but true, how Simplicius
would roar!

[Aside to another.] Oh! 't would be rare, 't would
serve the miser right.

[*The other, aside.*] His cunning purchase, too ! oh,
glorious !

An old Courtier. I heard reports, but felt so much
enraged

I'd not acknowledge by repeating them.

They can't be called preposterous enough.

To think that Alaric, the Prefect of

Eastern Illyria, in service of

The eastern Emperor, could ever dare

To think of leading his barbarians

Against our Italy and Rome itself—

Against the person of your Majesty—

Much shocks my mind, and sounds most impious.

Emp. Why, were it true, how could we stay his
course !

How came it any ever thought it true ?

A Courtier. No one indeed could ever think it so,
But timid men made mad by sudden fright.

A Courtier. E'en were it true, with armoured troops
so loyal,

So generalled, in such a noble cause,

Thy royal pulse need not increase its beat,

So surely would success re-crown your arms.

Her. If Alaric had dared renew the fight,

Dost think he would have kept from doing so

When almost all the troops were being clasped

In fearful grapple with Rhadasius,

And Italy encumbered with his host ?

A Courtier. Reasons seem weak against impossibles.

Emp. Our noble aunt would not have kept all this
From us. We should have been the first to hear
Had any of these rumours sounded true.

A Courtier. The legions would have been led forth
from camp,
And martial deeds have been in every mouth,
Your gracious Majesty in every heart.

Her. Inquiries, almost, should be made from whence
This miserable panic-bubble rose,
And its mad authors punished with the lash.

A Courtier. It would be less than justice when
'twere done.

All Courtiers. It would, it would! let them be punished
straight.

Ser. [*entering.*] I fear I interrupt your royal Court,
But some events bear such imposing fronts—
So fascinate us with their awful look—
As to fright out of us all thoughts of state.
I would not now alarm your Majesty
And spread dismay mid these assembled lords,
But that this present time requires yourself—
Your bravest energies, your wisest thoughts,
United with the mutual aid of all,
Successfully to meet its threatenings—
Its sudden, all unlooked-for threatenings.
The strange report that fluttered o'er the town
For some days past, howe'er astounding, is
Too true. Fierce Alaric and all the Goths
Are hastening here against your Majesty.

Emp. Are coming here—to Milan—'gainst ourselves?

Sen. 'Tis so indeed. While yet a doubt remain'd
I uttered not a word to trouble you ;
We now must drop our words and act our thoughts.

What says your Majesty, will you stop here
And wait a siege within this crowded town,
Or e'en withdraw, at once, to some retreat,
Strong in itself, where succours can be brought?

Emp. Indeed, I know not. I am so surprised,
I scarce know where I am. Until this hour
No rumour e'er reached us. What shall we do?
Where is your lord, the noble Stilicho?

Ser. Your Majesty forgets he's still away,
Enforcing peace, once more, in southern Gaul.
Thank God, there's little doubt that long ere this,
He's learn'd, from a few faithful Gothic chiefs,
Full tidings of this desperate advance.
Indeed, if we could wait for a few days
I should expect some messengers from him.

A Courtier [*aside.*] It must be true, by Jove! Poor
Simplius!

I dare not laugh. Her royal face looks fierce.

Ser. [*to Her.*] My lord, what say you, if this town's
besieg'd

Can you ensure the safety of us all?

Her. Against barbarians, in such a cause,
The troops, tho' few, would be invincible—
And yet, as Milan is so populous,
Unfortified, and unprovisioned too,

I cannot, as a soldier, recommend
His Majesty to choose it for defence.

Ser. Then we must leave, at once; for time, just now,
Means arms and men, security and strength.
Fix but the place, and then we'll all disperse,
And urge the speedy preparations for
Our instant journey hence. Where shall we go?

Her. That question's burdened with such vast results
As well may stagger any single head.

Emp. Why wait not 'till we've heard from Stilicho,
And then we may not have to move at all?

A Courtier. Not leave your royal palace gates at all.

A Courtier. 'Twould be degrading to your Majesty
To make retreat before this fresh-crowned king!

Another Courtier. What? Rome's most sacred Emperor
to fly

At the mere sound of Alaric's advance!

Ser. My lords, such aggravating words as these,
If heard at all, would be but maddening.
We must pin down all wand'ring wond'ring thoughts
To the one question in discussion now,
The place to which we'd better all remove.

A Courtier. So grave a matter should be thought
well o'er.

If I might recommend his Majesty,
I think a council should determine it.

Ser. Are we not now in council on the point?
A loos'd wild beast is springing at our throats,
And, 'stead of turning on one side, you say,

Collect together all your roaming thoughts,
And pause to take the council they may give.
Shall we move north or south, upward to Gaul
To join my lord, or south to Italy? [A pause.]

A Courtier. Northwards to Gaul to join your noble
lord.

Others. His Majesty must be made doubly safe.

Ser. We risk that Alaric may turn aside
And try to intercept our northward way;
By turning west he'd miss the swelling streams..
What think you, Count Heraclian, of this?

Her. Your royal grace, I think there's little doubt
But, if we hasted, we should be in time
Safely to reach a fortress in South Gaul.

Ser. But then we leave defenceless Italy,
And Rome itself lies open to his grasp!

A Courtier. Where'er the Emperor may be is Rome
To every loyal Roman heart; far best
That Rome's mere walls and body should be lost
Than its divine soul-citadel be hurt.

Ser. But to abandon Rome—the capital!

Her. There's no strong fortress in north Italy?

Ser. His Majesty might hasten south to Nice,
And there take ship round towards eastern Spain,
Until this sudden storm had passed away?

Emp. We never will endure the sea again!
Indeed, we'd sooner stay here as we are.

A Courtier. Your Majesty must mercifully respect
Our anxious hearts. Your safety's everything.

Another Courtier. While but the faintest doubt of
that remained

It would unnerve thy boldest servant's heart.

Another Courtier. Let's all devote ourselves to gain
at once

Some certain refuge from this horrid storm.

Ser. I never can consent to give up Rome.

Her. Indeed, we should not yield the capital—

But to defend it and his Majesty?—

A Courtier. Ay, ay, we can't do both, and life
stands first.

We all have countries—countries we may lose,

But life, our very selves, we must make sure.

Ser. We must not give up Rome. There's danger,
too,

In moving northwards. Count Heraclian,

Can't you devise some southern resting-place?

Is Italy defenceless 'gainst the Goth,

Quite open to an armed mob of men?

Are all its towns—are all its people vain?

Her. Could one be thought of, 'twould be better far.

If we go northwards, we must go at once.

Or, as your royal grace just pointed out,

The Goths might intercept us on our way.

A Courtier. There's danger there. Let's fly some
other way.

Courtiers. Let's go at once—safety stands first of all.

Ser. We will prepare at once, and, ere we start,
Who knows, we may receive far better news.

Or, e'en, perchance, hear from my noble lord.
'Tis safest to prepare, in haste not fear,
E'en if we've not to leave here after all.

Courtiers. Let's go at once—at once—let's go at once!

Emp. My noble aunt, had we not better go?

Courtiers. His Majesty has said we go at once.

[*Courtiers gather round SERENA.*]

Ser. What shall I do? We cannot give up Rome.
Oh! Count Heraclian, what shall I do?
What would be said? To give the capital—
To give up Rome itself—to all the Goths!
It cannot be, indeed, it cannot be!
My lords, I'd sooner front these Goths myself!

•
Enter STILICHO in travelling dress.

Ser. [*to STILICHO.*] Hast brought fresh news? Great
God! 'Tis Stilicho! [*Sinks down.*]

Stil. What, all assembled here? Thank God, indeed!

[*The lords make way for him.*]

Nay, do not move, your gracious Majesty.

[*Salutes EMPEROR, and raises and kisses SERENA.*]

Thank you, my lords.

A Courtier.

The noble Stilicho!

Then we are safe.

Another Courtier. 'Tis Stilicho! Who e'er
Had any fear?

Stil. Hearing the news, I thought
I'd bring it to your Majesty myself,
Leaving the troops to come with Larcus.

Emp. Thank the great God that you are here your-
self.

Stil. I see you've heard the news.

Emp. 'T was but just now
My lord, whilst here. I knew not of 't indeed.

Stil. Then little time's been saved. You will, my
lords,

Pardon my urgency in snapping forms,
And asking those who'll join us not in arms
To leave at once until peace reigns again.
In war, mere numbers are but burdensome,
And much just now depends upon our speed.

A Courtier. Most noble lord, your hastiest wish is
law,

As your most unexpected presence is
Our strongest shield. I need scarce say that aught
That we can do—our puny influence
Command—is wholly yours, although we know,
Without such wooden arms, success is sure.
But do not in our need abandon us,
Throw overboard the ballast, not the crew.

Another Courtier. We will all join with you, but then
in truth

We're men of peace—mere bunglers with the sword.

Stil. Look you, my lords, the time is hazardous—
Your country and your Emperor's defied.

Your homes, your wives, your families attacked.
Feel yourselves Roman citizens—give up
Your slaves, your wealth, if not your very lives,
To battle with this present Hannibal,
And let us all unite for victory !

A Courtier. Dost say we are to yield thee all our
slaves ?

Another Courtier. Prevent the laying waste Liguria—
'Tis all the territory I have now—

And you shall take my slaves, most noble lord ?

Another Courtier. One victory will save us all alike.

Another Courtier. How the most noble lord could
ever come

So many miles, within so short a time,
Without, so 't seems, his body guard of troops,
Or e'en outriders or attendant slaves
To feed his journey's wants, surpasses all
The gloried exploits that we've ever heard.

Stil. Minutes run on, whether we move or not.
My lords, I wish you hastily farewell.

Courtiers. Must we away indeed ? Where shall we go ?

Stil. Arrange away among yourselves, my lords,
And let me know, within an hour from now,
Which of you cast your fortunes in with ours.
Farewell, my lords.

Courtiers. Farewell, your Majesty.
Farewell, my noble lord.

Emp. Farewell, my lords.

[*Exeunt Courtiers, except COUNT HERACLIAN.*]

Stil. Serena, God alone's unchecked by time,
We all are subject equally to it,
Leave then at once to give your orders for
The preparations for your journey hence.
You must all leave to-morrow at daybreak;
When you return we will arrange the route.

Ser. So soon as that? However, I'll lose no time.
I'll tell dear Lucia that you are come.
I think I left her with my Maria,
Trying to make her realize our strait.

And may our slaves know now when we must leave?

Stil. They must know soon. Ay, they had best
know now.

[*Exit SERENA.*]

Emp. I'm glad that you've arrived, my noble lord,
You've saved our running after you to Gaul.

Stil. I'm glad I'm here in time, your Majesty.
Such backward steps from these most trait'rous Goths,
Abandoning all Italy to them,
Could scarce have been retraced. I know them well,
And can foresee this new-made king's designs.
He leads a nation, not an army on.
His is no plundering raid to seize and fly,
No awful scourge to slay and devastate,
But the full onward flow of some vast stream
To be staved off perchance, but not removed,
If once its waters fully flood the land,
And keep unbroken onflow from their source.

[To HERACLIAN.] Has his march sounded in the city yet ?

Her. It has indeed, just now, my noble lord.
Were you not challenged as you came for news ?
Did you not notice how the men seemed scared ?
And how the women talked each other hoarse ?

Stil. I noticed nought. Tho' now I call to mind,
'Twas so. I saw the troops were still encamp'd !

Her. None of us dared to think the rumour true.

Stil. What numbers have you here, my lord ?

Her. Three parts,
Most noble lord, of two full legions—say
Twelve thousand men, besides some cavalry.

Stil. So few. 'Tis true, indeed, that victory
Consumes the body while it fires the soul.
The empire's army seems already gone !
The frontier troops are in Verona's walls.

Ser. [*re-entering.*] All the domestics looked so very
scar'd,
I could not bring myself to tell them of 't.
Howe'er, dear Lucia knows all ; she'll see
No time is lost—rest sure.

Stil. 'Tis just as well.
You'll have to leave three-fourths of them behind.

Ser. I did not see the chamberlain—so could
Not tell e'en him. Dear Maria much wished
To see you, to assure herself 'twas you,
She seemed quite frightened that you'd come yourself,
Instead of feeling safe. Where shall we go ?

Stil. Where I may bring the troops to save alike
Their country and their Emperor.

Ser.

You mean

To Italy. But is there safety there?

Stil. What force of Goths could scale Ravenna's walls
Whilst moated by the sea beyond bow-shot?
The Count Heraclian shall be your guard,
With all the troops he has or can collect;
I, with the army I've just left, shall stay,
And cover Milan, if they keep on here;
Whilst, if they turn to Italy, your troops,
So safely housed, will stay their moving on
Nearer to Rome, by threatening their retreat,
And holding them in check till I can come,
With all the empire's thinly scattered troops,
And fence them out.

Ser.

Ravenna let it be.

Ere you arrived all wished to go to Gaul,
And leave Rome to the Goths, say what I would.

Her. Until your noble lord enlightened us
We could not think of a safe resting-place
In Italy.

Ser.

But how can we get there
Without the fearful risk that Alaric
May overtake us with his swarming hosts?

Stil. Think of the rivers he must pass—rivers
Whose streams e'en now are doubtless swollen with rain,
And will be angry torrents when he leads
His nation to their deeply-hidden banks,

And, finding all the bridges broken down,
Makes hapless search for the accustomed fords
By which the women with their carried young
Might cross, as well as the less burdened men ;
He'll have to wait to float them o'er on rafts,
When he has reached the nearer, larger streams.

Her. The rise is late this year, my noble lord,
And scarcely has commenced as yet, although
It must come soon, unless the gods show spite.

Stil. Go southwards to the sea, out of their way,
And if they follow, pressing on your track,
Why e'en take ship until you learn their course.
Besides you need not fear—each mountain pass
Would be a citadel—the Apennines
A chain of fortresses, against their host ;
Although a town that's circled in with walls
Should be your aim ; he can't manœuvre you
From that, and shall not starve you out.

Ser. May God avert such an extreme resort.

Her. His Majesty objects to take the sea ?

Emp. We trust ourselves entirely in your hands—
We will go anywhere that you think best.

Stil. Your Majesty may safely trust me this.
I will arrange with Count Heraclian
The details of your journey ere we part.

Ser. But how can you collect the troops you want ?

Stil. From all the provinces. All garrisons
And distant countries must yield up their men,
The strength of all the limbs must guard the heart,

E'en if the limbs are sacrificed themselves.
I've sent already both to Gaul and Spain,
And even to the distant British Isles,
For all the legions to assemble here
Quick as they can.

Ser. And when do you expect
To gather them ?

Stil. All I can promise is,
Whene'er the troops arrive they'll find me here,
Waiting their coming with some fresh recruits.
You shake your head ; but though I purchase slaves,
I'll have recruits, provisions, baggage, arms,
And transports, and all else that's requisite
To move the army, by forced marches, on.

Ser. It must be so, although I do not like
The Emperor to be divided from
Yourself, now that we're all together here.

Stil. [*to Her.*] You'll give the orders to the troops at
once.

Her. I will, my noble lord.

Stil. I shall have seen
And settled with the courtiers ere you're back.

[*Exit HERACLIAN.*]

Ser. You look worn out ?

Stil. I shall sleep well to-night,
And feed well soon, I hope. I'm much in debt.
I and my horses loitered not for food.
Had Alaric delayed but half a week,

F

I should not have been driven as I've been.

I had my eyes suspiciously on him.

Ser. Your Majesty will pardon if I ask

Whether it is your pleasure now to leave?

Emp. We? Yes—we missed our morning's later bath.

[*Exeunt all.*]

SCENE II.—*The river Addua in front.—Gothic embankments beyond, and the town of Asta in the distance. On the right, in front of the river, the remains of a Cottage—half rubbish, half walls—and on the extreme left, in the distance, the span of a bridge across the river. Twilight.*

Enter STILICHO.

Stil. [to *Max.*] Thank God, Maximus, they're safe.

Through the dusk

The signal-lights glimmered reply to ours.

We've spoken, spite the Goths. O Maximus,

I feel myself a boy, and long to shout—

To spring into the air—to do some act

To vent my bursting heart. I could reward

My bitterest enemy to see him smile;

If I but saw a woman, I should weep—

To think of my dear wife almost brings tears.

Max. We've cause, indeed, as yet, for thankfulness.

Stil. To look back fearlessly upon the time

When day by day, at Milan, I sent out

To learn the slumbering rivers had woke up, .

To hurry the advancing legions on,
And sent in vain—when all my energies,
My few recruits, and many implements,
Together with my band of veterans,
Seemed rusting there in very idleness—
When we first heard that Lodi had been ta'en,
While all its population was engrossed
In watching gladiators kill themselves—
When ambushed doubts rose up in open strength,
And made me almost wish I'd gone with them,
And done my best without such far-fetched aid—
When we were certain they were here besieged,
But racked with doubt that we should be too late,
As erst I was to save good Lucius—
Nay, even fearlessly to look upon
These last few days' fierce race to be in time,
Is heart-relief beyond all utterance,
Bespeaks a gratitude I ne'er can pay,
Dwarfs e'en the torture I've been suffering.

Max. 'Tis a relief, my lord, to see the foe.
Some of these very hounds, and not three years
Ago, were crouching under my command.
Howe'er, they're generalled as well as led,
They've trenched themselves upon the other side,
You see, in such a way as to prevent
Our cavalry attacking them at all.
We're out of breath, and do but face our foe !

Stil. What, Maximus, hast any doubts left now ?
You know not what one man can do,

Winged with a will to force his way through aught.

Before the foe I feel myself a god.

They cannot stand before us, Maximus ;

I know them well, and know the strength I hold ;

These men we've here are hardy veterans,

Whose only peaceful hour has been the camp,

Not strange allies of doubtful loyalty,

To melt away, perchance, when wanted most,

Not raw recruits, nor rash adventurers ;

Would they were more, would they were not our all.

Had Rome troops still left in her provinces,

No Goth of all yon host should e'er return.

Max. But if all's lost, what shall we do ?

Stil.

Our best.

But, mind you, 'tis a fight we dare not lose.

Max. My noble lord, implant such confidence

In your exhausted troops ; and they must gain,

With whatsoever loss, the victory.

Stil. The loss ? a soldier should not think of that—

It but unnerves his wonted steadiness.

We shall all feel it, as it is, too soon.

Yet 'twill not be so bloody as I feared—

Half feared in fright. Vengeance, thank God, but
points ;

Thank God, I say, she has not maddened me.

My savage heart's all lighter than it was ;

I shall forgive them ere I punish them.

Oh ! it will be a crowning day. A fight

Upon a plain 'gainst my old enemy,

Now crowned a king. No woman's subtle game
Of politics; no mountain passes for
Escape; no mob of savages to slay;
And then, no barren victory to gain,
But wife and child and empire to set free.
'Twill be a day to crown the longest life.

You look surprised to see me thus?—Now then,
What have we here? This was the ferry-house?

Max. 'Twas so when I was here before, my lord.

Stil.

Let's see—

The river runs out like a tight-strung bow
To th' bridge, of which the near town-wall's the string;
The Gothic troops are massed right round the town,
The bulk far on the other side away;
Nor can it squeeze itself upon this side—

[*A short pause.*]

How deep is 't?

Max.

Here, 'tis almost breast high.

[*Feels with his sword.*]

'T was deeper on the other side, I think.

Stil. [*treading down into the water.*] The gravel
bottom gives firm treading, too.

Our armour-weighted men can ford through here,
Slanting with the stream; 'tis shallower so.

[*Stilicho steps upon bank.*]

Max. The heavy-armed men?

Stil.

Certainly.

Max.

Shall you,

My lord, keep back the light-armed in reserve?

Stil. I shall. 'Tis seldom best; but 'tis so here.
You shake your head at such a breach of rules;
But all hangs on the fortunes of the day,
And till 'tis mine I'll trust none but myself.
Let each man take a stone from out the heap,
And hold it o'er his head to steady him,
Until he gains the deepest part, and then
Deposit it. Let Spereus' men go first,
Eucherius with them. And when safe o'er,
They're not to quit the other bank, until
You're there yourself with a full company.
Milo's to be here all day, keeping back
The ranks, and passing all the men across
In one clear stream. These ruins they have made
Should build a road for our avenging troops.

[*Stilicho examines the ground carefully.*]

Maximus, I shall send the cavalry
Round by the other ford—cross both the streams—
So as to threaten all their other side,
And draw it off, if possible, in fight,
For some few hours, when they can gallop back,
To charge all Goths retreating from the bridge,
And change retreat to flight. You move across
At earliest stir of the awakening day,
Taking some archer skirmishers with you,
To gain and keep connection with the town.
This done, move through 't at once without delay,
And show yourselves in force towards the bridge:
I'll feed the stream across here to the town;

I, with my whole reserve, shall face the bridge,
As though I should at once attack its front,
And so retain King Alaric up there.

You understand my plans ?

Max. I do, my lord.

Stil. The Count was pressed full hard, I'll warrant
me,

To leave the bridge unbroken in his rear ;
The Goths, too, show their fire in leaving it,
And trusting to their strength to beat us off.

Max. Could they have broken it ?

Stil. Alaric could.

He has not even barricaded it.

'Tis a strong bridge ; they cannot break it now.

They are not forced to husband up their men.

Max. When through the town shall I engage the foe
At once, or try to wait till you attack ?

Stil. Nay, do not wait ; I'll choose my time. Press on
Your swelling ranks e'en further from the town,
Against their rear, wedging them on the bridge ;
At the right time I shall lead on my men,
Reserved for't—force it—and combine with you,
Driving back their host against our cavalry.
I shall not move until the battle's mine.

Max. 'Tis well the Goths appear to rest secure ;
The river frees them from attack this side.

Stil. Eucherius will go on to the town
With you, bearing the tidings to the Court ;
You'll take provisions, too, in case they're short.

Obtain them from my guards when they come up.
I'll now see Larcus and his cavalry;
I must ride round with him before 'tis night.
Meanwhile, good Maximus, arouse yourself,
And cheer your men; I know you'll do the rest.

Max. It matters not. Howe'er, I'll do my best.
Their strength's worn out, like mine.

Stil. You should eat more;
You cannot spend without the means. Drink wine,
'Twill serve you well; you're too abstemious
In everything; and give some to your men—
Not overnight, to make them sleep too hard,
But in the morn before they wade the stream.
And mind you do not light your night-fires near't.

[*Exeunt both.*]

SCENE III.—*Imperial Residence.—Asta.—Serena's State Apartments. Morning.*

SERENA and MARIA.

Mar. Why did we leave dear Milan to come here?
Oh! how this long confinement, and this place—
This musty choked-up prison—wearies me.
No malefactor under punishment,
With all his fetters, can bear half the weight
Of wretchedness which now oppresses me—
A lady innocent, of royal blood.
It's hard, it's cruel to be pent up here,

All through the dreary, dreary length of light,
Fed with the food a household slave would leave,
Debarred from all the world's society,
Watched ever as a prisoner by my maids,
And, as the subtlest cruelty of all,
Daily obliged to meet the Emperor—
T' attract him as a suitor to myself—
Whilst I'm decked out in rags, the patchwork of
My mother's clothes, my maid's false jewellery.
It is but asking him to tire of me!

Ser. It was a pity all your things were lost,
But you'll confess 'twas better that the Goths
Should have seized them, than the imperial gems
And public treasures they so nearly did?

Mar. We ought not t' have been put to these sad
straits.

Look at the frightful, awful risks we run.

Ser. If you'd eat more, and take more exercise,
As I so oft have asked you to, you'd feel
That the long-watched-for morn of our escape,
The arrival of our sure deliverer,
The approaching downfall of these daring Goths,
Is not the time to brood o'er petty griefs.

Mar. You who're so strong, without a yielding tear,
Can never know nor feel my wretchedness.
As if mere nourishment, mere outward strength,
Could reach the sorrow deep down in my heart!

Ser. But, Maria, mere brooding grief's not deep—
The stagnant rain-pools which pretend to show

The vision of the solid earth beneath,
But mirror what o'erhangs them upside down :
E'en so weak tears make but a show of grief,
Without correcting or enlarging it.
Howe'er unknowingly, you hold, yourself,
The very clue to your own happiness,
Just as you did the jewels which you thought
Your maids had stolen.

Mar. I know not but they have.

Ser. My child, arouse yourself—look well around.
When the glad news burst on us yester eve,
I felt myself o'ercome with very joy,
My concentrated faculties seemed loosed,
My self-command was gone, I could do nought
But look in eager gratitude to God.
E'en now my nerves refuse to do their work,
As all last night they would not take their rest.
You cannot surely be alone unmoved—
Keep ever talking of your lack of dress,
With cheeks as pale as moonlit clouds at night,
And look as listless as a widowed bride
Whose maids are combing out her beauteous hair,
Instead of joyful, as the bride elect
Of Rome's crowned Emperor, the whole world's head !

Mar. Who's powerless to restrain these Goths' advance,
And does not feel indignant that he is !
Howe'er I quarrel not with him ; though weak
Beyond most others, he is my own choice ;

I marry him, well knowing what he is ;
I only say I've ground for just complaint—
Far better grounds than any other has.
None miss the courtiers half as much as I.

Ser. Can you forget that but a few short hours
Will bring you back all that you now so miss ?
The more your loss the greater your relief.

Mar. To-morrow's chance scarce salves our wounds
to-day.

Ser. And why to-morrow's chance ? Why chance
at all ?

'Tis certain, instant rescue that is brought,
Or will be so within an hour or two.
I am expecting now the lookers-out
With the heart-flushing news.

Mar. 'Tis Easter Day !

Ser. It is a day appropriate indeed
For the great God to grant deliverance,
To raise us from the death-grasp of this place.

Mar. I do not think the troops will fight to-day.

Ser. I'm sure that Stilicho won't lose an hour.

Mar. At break of dawn, when waking me, as I
Had bade them then to do, this morn, my maids
Told me that they could see our Roman troops
Marching about before the guarded bridge ;
The Goths retain it still free from attack.
Have you yet seen Father Olympius ?

Ser. I have not yet ; but wherefore do you ask ?

Mar. For no great reason, but not long ago

I left him talking with the Emperor,
Proposing special services, in which
The soldiers might, to-day, join with us all.

Enter CHAMBERLAIN.

Cham. I bear glad tidings to your royal grace !
Some cohorts of the heavy-armoured troops
Have gained an entrance to the town.

Ser. Are here ?

Cham. Your royal grace, they are indeed, though
how

They crossed the river no one can e'en guess.

Ser. How quickly now comes lagging victory ?

Mar. They must, of course, have forced the bridge
at last.

Cham. Pardon, your grace, the Goths still hold the
bridge.

Ser. Could they have swam across ?

Mar. With armour on !

Ser. Hast heard who heads the troops who've now
arrived ?

Cham. Your royal grace, I fear that I have not.

Enter OLYMPIUS.

Oly. A holy Easter dawn upon your grace.

Ser. Pray, holy father, that it may indeed.

[*To Chamberlain.*] Glean further news.

[*Exit CHAMBERLAIN.*

[To OLYMPIUS.]

You've heard my dear

lord's troops

Already have forced entrance to the town ?

Oly. Can your grace mean that on this holy day
The soldiers of the sacred Emperor
Have broke alike the Sabbath and the feast,
And offered up their fellow-Christians' blood,
On His own day, to blessed Mary's Son—
The Prince of Peace ?

Ser. You speak with pointing words,
Good father, as if vexed ?

Oly. Vexed ? I am shocked !
Is it a dream—a vision sent from hell ?
I've been much weakened by my Lenten fasts,
And scarcely am prepared to bear a shock—
Or is it that an heathen host is there,
And not the soldiers of the Emperor ?

Ser. You surely, father, think too much of this.
You say 'tis wrong, and, tho' I thought it not,
No doubt it is ; but then, if wrong's been done,
'Twas ignorantly done. My noble lord,
A soldier from his birth, has just gained sight
Of the fierce foe who's overrun our state,
Who's done his worst to rob and murder us,
And holds us still within his open hand
Trying in vain to crush us in his grasp ;
What wonder then if Stilicho at once
(Not knowing but that now we might succumb)

Tears from our side the rav'ning enemy
Without e'er thinking of the time or day ?

Oly. O war ! unmitigated curse of sinful man,
Defiling all who blood their hands in it,
What are you but a struggling hell on earth,
Changing sweet Christian love to devilish hate,
Expelling by your rage all thoughts of God !

Ser. Yet God himself gave his own people war !
If ever one great cause, binding all hearts,
Was justly worth the payment of our lives,
If ever one great wrong, firing the breasts
Of citizens, rightly inspirèd them
To leave their homes, give up their liberty,
And place themselves as weapons in one hand,
If such dread union was ever right,
If war was ever righteous, this war is.

Oly. If ever God's just vengeance was incurred
By sacrilegious violence of man,
I fear, my daughter, that it's been so now,
And, deeply I deplore, by thy great lord.
This step of his is down a precipice
Imperiling the souls of all his men,
Cutting repentance off from those that fall.
Let us indeed thank God 'tis not our act,
Let us ward off His curse from this royal house
With deep prostration and continued prayers,
By an exclusive trust in his defence,
And clear avoidance of the sin we mourn ;

Let's see at least we mock Him not by that—
No soldier should bear arms this sacred day.

Ser. Good father ! urge it not upon this morn ;
When all so late 'twould be but treachery.
My lord, to gain our safety, risks his own ;
With scarce more troops than we have sheltered here
He braves the myriad Goths in open fight,
Assails them too across a river's flow,
Depending on our joining hands with him ;
Thou surely wouldst not have us now draw back,
Have all our archers moved from off the walls
Now they can save our soldiers' lines, as well
As take the enemy's, our men disarmed
Just when they can advance against the foe !
Nay, when my dear lord comes, e'en shut him out
And tell him loudly o'er our lofty walls
To come some other day and rescue us !
Thou couldst not have us see him hunted down,
Standing at bay, before our fastened gates ?

Oly. Your overwrought imagination shapes
A most unlikely dream. Your noble lord,
Finding that his advance draws no response,
Will glean at once the truth he's trampling on,
And, drawing back in holy faith and fear,
Will gain the assured repose he must require.
I've said thus much to ease your straining mind,
But let me raise it up to higher thoughts.
Dare not thou use thy God as some great power
To be called in to aid thy purposes—

To be dismissed when they are satisfied.

[*Pointing upwards.*]

In his most jealous sight one course alone
Can be the right, that course must be pursued
Where'er 't may lead; our faith in Him's not faith,
If when 'tis tried it melts away—is not.
What is that discipline that stays not flight,
What courage is't that flies the battle-field?
Now is the time indeed, before the world,
At every risk, to show your perfect faith,
To prove to God you love him 'fore aught else,
To trust entirely in His hand your lives,
Your dearest ties, your sacred Emperor.

Ser. Enough, good father, 'tis impossible;
You force me to refuse your strange request.
I thought indeed your reason would have sway.
I hoped, in vain, your heart would ope your eyes.
I am a woman bearing royalty,
Entrusted with this empire for a while;
For me there's but one way, a happy one,
To aid my husband to set free the State.

Oly. And is the Emperor aware of this?

Ser. Good father, has he asked you to inquire?

Oly. E'en headlong evil's guided to our good
By Him who limits both. May't now be so?
A rankless, powerless monk may point the way,
But, like an o'erruled pilot, can't do more;
Besides, and 'tis a truth I cannot sound,
In mightiest storms the ship must drive its way.

Until this holy morn, your royal grace,
I've nine times daily offered up my prayers
That victory may crown your soldiers' arms;
If now I dare not offer up such prayers
And ask God's blessing on your arms, I still
Can call His curse upon your enemies,—
Those bitter heretics to His true faith.
You must forgive my venturing to risk
My wicked self for God's unvaried truth.

Ser. Keep bold for that and I will succour you.

Oly. Your royal grace is gracious as of old.

[*Exit* OLYMPIUS.]

Mar. I fear the holy father must feel hurt.

Ser. You fear he's hurt? You're thoughtfulness
itself!

Mar. I really scarce see why this sacred day
Should from all others have been chosen out.
Much as you know I wish to leave this place,
I would quite willingly stay one day more
For such a cause.

Ser. Endurance most complete!

Mar. Perhaps some day you'll treat me not with
scorn!

What's that—they would not dare—the enemy?

[*Heavy approaching steps—loud voice.*]

Ser. What, child! do you not know your brother's
voice? [*Rises.*]

Enter EUCHERIUS.

Euch. [*embraces SERENA, and bows to MARIA.*] What
lots of splendid guards you've idling here !
All right. Well met, by Jove ! I'm wet to skin.

Ser. God bless you, boy. Your father ?

Euch. He'll not come
Until he's finished thrashing these rough Goths.—
He's far more patience than I e'er shall have.

Mar. But is he safe ? These Goths are terrible.

Euch. He still keeps facing them 'midst all the rain,
Not yet crossed swords—great Mars ! as tho' afraid !
By all the gods ! I pity the poor Goths
Who stand before him when he does advance.
But how you're penned up here, and have been—ah !
You both look pale as if you were half starved.
I've brought provisions tho' : they'll soon be here ;
They'll last you till the river-boats arrive.
'Tis lucky that my lord had thought of them.

Ser. Nay, my dear boy, it is not that indeed,
Although fresh food would aid your sister's health,
My patience has just now been sorely tried,
And strangely. Would believe it, that the monk
Olympius desired me to forbid
Our soldiers fighting on this Easter day ?
Wished me to close the gates, disarm the men,
And stay your entry till to-morrow's dawn ?

Euch. Ho ! ho ! the folly of your dried-up priests !
Old men may mourn the thoughtlessness of youths,

Prate of their vain assurance and conceit,
Distrust their warm impetuosity,
And think them folly's true monopolists ;
But when you want to find the blindest fool,
The wildest, most persistent ass of all,
Search 'mongst your lonely men of principle.
A fool on principle's a fool indeed !

Mar. Eucherius, he is a holy man.

Euch. Were he not one he were not such a fool.
A man that is a man lets instinct prompt—
Lets all his honest nature have full scope,
And uses every faculty he has,
And finds he wants them all to be led right ;
Does not turn up his eyes sky-high, mooning,
To keep himself forsooth immaculate.

Ser. The holy father's best apologies
Are bodily infirmities, which he,
Instead of soothing, tries, as 'twere, to spite—
They must drag down dispassionate forethought.
But you've not told me aught about the fight,
Nor how, without my lord, you gained the town.

Euch. I scarcely know ; there is but little yet
To talk about ; howe'er, I tell you what
We did. I found the heavy-armour'd troops
Were marshalled near the bank by Maximus,
Whilst still 'twas dark. At the first flush of dawn
All sprang into the water's bed pell-mell,
And, half wading, half swimming, flounder'd through,
The short men ballasting themselves with stones.

Once on this side, we form'd the men in line,
Dispers'd the few scar'd Goths who were in front,
And took their breastworks without many blows,
Gaining the camp before they were aroused.
This quick success, as 't proved, near ruined us.
Our lines were broke, our men eye-strain'd for spoil—
The plunder of our own despoiled towns,
When some wild clan of Goths, in their escape,
Fell from an inner tent upon our troops,
Surprising us e'en more than we had them;
Most luckily they did but look for flight
And only cut down those that stopped their way:
This bloody fight aroused the scatter'd men
Whom we re-form'd and led straight to the town,
Winding beneath the archer-guarded walls
Round to the gate fronting the Roman road.

Mar. Thank God that you're here safe.

Ser. Did not our troops
Advance from out the walls to aid your arms
And cross the enemy's?

Euch. They soon join'd us.
I left them under Maximus, engaged
In throwing up rough breastworks to ensure
Our free communication with my lord.

Ser. The heavy-arm'd, then, stay not in the town?

Euch. No. When safe, Maximus is to pass them
Straight through the town towards the guarded bridge,
Where I must meet him 'fore he meets the Goths.
In fact, I must go now.

Ser. And Stilicho?

Euch. He's threat'ning an attack against the bridge,
But says he will not move till Maximus
Shows at the town this side. I must away.

Ser. 'Twas good of you, my boy, to come at all.
Your mother's blessing ever goes with you.

Mar. Mind for our sake you shun all needless risk.

Euch. Ay, as you'd pick your way between rain
drops.

I shall get rid of danger, as they say
You should a jade, by courting her too much.

Mar. Eucherius!

Euch. Good-bye.

Ser. God bless you, boy!

[*Exit EUCHERIUS.*]

He is as noble as his body says.

Mar. He's somewhat rough, it's good for him of
course.

Ser. A roughness which would do you good yourself.

Mar. A roughness which would do me good! You'd
like

To see me get as harden'd as a man,
Fierce as a big-boned Amazon,
Expose myself to weather such as this,
And mix in bloody scenes of wounded men,
Or breathe the putrid air and hear the oaths
Within the brutal soldiers' hospital
Like Lucia, and like the Gothic squaws?

Ser. You know, as well as I, I wish not this.

We'll say no more. I offered but a hint
Suggested by your brother's better health.

[SERENA *claps her hands*. Chamberlain *appears*.]

Cham. Your royal grace.

Ser. Have some provisions come,
Sent by my lord, most noble Stilicho?
Place them in store, but bring wine here at once.

[*Exit Chamberlain.*]

[*To Mar.*] The wine will do you good. I long to see
Such firstfruits of our glad deliverance.

Mar. Now that Lent's o'er I'll taste again some wine,
The more indeed to please you than myself.
I wonder where the Emperor is now!

Ser. And wine too's wanted in the hospital;
Who knows but it might save some ebbing life.

Mar. The Emperor himself has had none yet.

Re-enter Chamberlain, bearing wine.

Ser. See that some wine is handed o'er at once
To the imperial cup-bearer's control,
And send what then remains, by escort of
Some of my guards, on to the hospital.

[*Exit Chamberlain.*]

Mar. 'Tis he, 'tis now too late—he'll find it here!

[*Footsteps heard.*]

Enter LUCIA.

Ser. What then? 'Tis Lucia. So pale! What news?

Luc. Stale news, dear lady, of my foolishness:
Just when my strength was wanted most, it went,
And, fearing to distract, I had to leave.

'Tis nothing. I'm well now, indeed, quite well.

Ser. Art sure ?

Luc. I'm very vex'd, that's all.

Ser. And I—

I told you that you'd overstrain your strength.

Mar. I hope it's no disease that you have caught ?

Ser. [to LUCIA.] She knows hard work as little as disease,

So wonder not that she confuses them.

Mar. I care but little to know either more.

Ser. Heard you not any news ? A rumour's wealth,
And the troops' gossip's nourishment just now.

Luc. No ; I heard nothing. We'd to keep apart—
The men seemed flushed and getting violent,
Caring for none ; they frighten'd my poor maid,
Who was as glad to get away from them
As all our guards looked black at coming back.

Mar. I've often wondered, though I've ne'er found out,
What secret clue can draw you off so oft
To that most low and filthy hospital.
'T must be that you would like our Claudian
To sing of you. And your ambition is
To know that you'll be talk'd and read about
By nobles, senators,—by bishops and
Librarians—to feel that you'll be praised
At Athens and through all the provinces ?
But surely you have now o'ergain'd your point !

Ser. [to LUCIA.] Come, come, she must be humour'd
now, not teased.

But, Lucia, you want strong nourishment
As much as you do rest ; now drink some wine—
'Tis wine my son has brought from my dear lord.

Luc. 'Twill do me good, indeed ; but how much more
The weak and wounded in the hospital.

Ser. You've made a convert of me after all—
I've sent some there.

Luc. Thank you. You'll have some too ?
[*Offers MARIA wine.*]

Mar. Thank you—I'd rather not.

Ser. You promised me.

Mar. If you insist, I cannot break my word.

[*LUC. helps her and SER. to wine. MAR. sips wine.*]
I must prepare for chapel now. Good morn.

[*Exit MARIA.*]

Ser. and Luc. Good morn ! [*LUCIA drinks wine.*]

Ser. Poor girl, she can't be
well. She's now

Been fretting that she's no society,
And that the Emperor must tire of her.

Luc. What ? sorry that she's with the Emperor
Alone ? I cannot tell, but I should think
The very presence of the man I loved—
If one e'er found me whom I could but love—
Would pale all others from my dimmest sight.
You smile, and think, because I care for none,
I never shall ; indeed, I fear, you're right.

Ser. So you begin to tire already of
A single life !

Luc. No! oh, no! not the least.

Ser. Well, well. [*Sighs.*]

Luc. This bonnie wine has done me good—
You have not tasted yours?

Ser. 'Twould do me good,
An I could drink it.

[*LUCIA rising and standing over her with wine.*]

Luc. I will be your nurse.
Now 'tis medicine—why, your dress is damp!

Ser. My child, 'tis not from tears—I would it were—
'Twas from my boy; *he* loves me, Lucia.
There, there, I'm glad you're come, you'll comfort me
As none else could—none else. Oh, Lucia!
You little know how all my strength is gone,
How my poor heart is palsied through with fear,
My spirits all unstrung as my poor nerves.

Luc. Indeed, I wonder not but at your strength.

Ser. Till yester-eve, you know, I never tired.
I could transact the duties in the town,
Which want of magistrates had so increased,
And, with a zest, could store up and dole forth
The joint provisions as they were brought in,
Levied like taxes, to our treasury
By the imperial tribute-gatherers—
The only officers that we found here.
Could daily rouse our captain's listlessness,
Or wake up the desponding troops to life,
And still have time to see all went well here.
Till then, I did my part full well, thank God,

But now, I'm like a child that's fever-left—
The merest trifles stay and worry me,
Take up great shapes and mix with all my thoughts.

[LUCIA *drawing up a stool at SERENA's side, and taking her hand.*]

Luc. This day's enough to frighten even you.

Ser. Is it not horrible to sit down here
And know the stake that's being wrestled for—
My husband, children, country, all I love—
And move no hand to aid, nay, to see nought,
Endungeon'd here within this darken'd room,
Each minute dragging on the awful end!

Luc. We women must await with prayer and faith,
With trusting faith, the issue He allows.

Ser. The issue, what? You cannot doubt of it?
Dost think the Goths will swarm up through the town,
Bearing the head of Stilicho in front,
To massacre Rome's sacred Emperor,
And sack the palace—ay, this room? O God!

Luc. My dearest lady, torture not yourself,
I felt no doubt; indeed, I felt no dread—
How can I, with my perfect trust in Him?—
I'm firmer, stronger, than I was just now.
Nerve yourself now, as erst you nervèd us;
Think of the justice of our sacred cause,
The 'vantage of our soldiers' discipline
And steel-clad ranks, against their lawless force;
Think of the other grounds for confidence
With which you used to cheer our shrinking hearts,

When for so long we saw none but the foe;
Oh, think that those are here you looked for so—
That your dear son has just saluted you—
That Stilicho is here with victory.

Ser. My son! Ah! Lucia, you do not see
The awful dangers which he's facing now.
Some errant onward shaft may target him,
Some dying 'vengeful Goth may trip him up,
His dastard men desert him when worst pressed—
He must be ever foremost of them all.
And then the common hazards of the fight
To one so prominent in everything!
To think that that dear noble form of his
May now be weltering in its own blood,
And I but mother of a murdered son!

Luc. Let's pour the sorrows of our hearts to God,
And, resting, fear not what may then result.
He only can—He only cares to save.
Oh! think, dear lady, of His love for us
In all the many blessings of our life;
Think you He wills to break the form He's made,
To rack the anxious heart He's filled with love,
To aid the robber in his lawless theft?
Look at His care for what He's given us—
For lifeless things which cannot grieve nor joy,
Nor be of use to Him, but only us!
Look at His hand in the carv'd blades of grass,
For ever young, distinct, and numberless—
In each stay'd wave, with all its followers,

Prancing in vain against the heaven-plac'd shore—
In each day's sun moved round us from above
To light, and warm, and paint this world of ours !
Oh ! let us try indeed to feel His care,
Be patient in our dark and lonely night,
As are the meadows for the coming day,
As were the Christian martyrs years ago
Writhing beneath their pagan torturers !
Let's strive as best we can to realize
The calmness of His gaze, who now looks down,
All-powerful and yet all-merciful,
Upon our short-lived struggles here below !

Ser. You're right, dear Lucia, and I am wrong.
I know I ought just now to feel most brave,
Most grateful, for the answer to my prayers,
Most sure in Stilicho's complete success.
I know I should do so were we away
At Milan waiting tidings of the war ;
But here, whilst in the very midst of it,
In sound of all the tumult of the fray,
We wait, as 'twere, the victor's instant prize !

Enter CHAMBERLAIN.

Cham. I bring glad tidings to your royal grace;
The Goths have been repulsed with heavy loss.

Ser. The Goths have been repulsed ? Who holds
the bridge ?

What mean you, man ? Did not our troops attack ?

Cham. Your royal grace, it was your household troops,

And not those of the noble Stilicho,
Which were so unsuccessfully attacked.

Ser. The Count was left to keep connection with
My dear lord's troops, I think?

Luc. I did not hear.

You're sure it was the Goths that were repulsed?

Mess. Quite sure, my lady; they've a thousand slain.
Your royal grace, some said the enemy
Were trying to prevent the junction of
The fresh-come troops with yours, though others said
The Goths were hasting to defend the bridge.

Ser. Well, sir, then 'twas assail'd; it was, I know,
By Maximus this side, from out the town,
And on the other by my noble lord?

Cham. Your royal grace is ever right.

Ser. Was't so?

Cham. Your royal grace, it was not when they left.

Ser. 'Twas not? Where was the noble Stilicho?

Cham. They know not that, indeed, your royal
grace;

He must be conquering beyond their sight.

Ser. Hast glean'd particulars about this fray?

Cham. None, your most royal grace, save that they
saw,

Among the first brought back to hospital,
The poet Claudian.

Ser. Poor Claudian!

His mother, too, but now so lately dead.

They did not see the nature of his wounds?

Luc. Did they not learn if they were serious ?
They surely must have heard some whisperings.
Dost know which ward, sir, he was taken to ?

Cham. I haste at once, your royal grace, to learn.

Luc. [*aside.*] I should have been, I ought now to
be, there.

Ser. Poor Claudian ! You'll feel it, Lucia ;
He was your best assistant 'mongst the men
In realizing all your airy schemes
For bettering the hospital and troops.
Well, now he'll reap some benefit himself.

Luc. This blow brings home to me the strife outside.
I could not realize your grief before ;
But now I feel it to the full indeed.

Ser. I ought not to have been so weak, dear girl.
'Twas more the act of Maria than me ;
However, now I'm more myself again.
I'm glad I sent wine to the hospital ;
If Claudian should need some, 'twill be there.

Luc. It will be so. I had no thought of that.
I trust, indeed, he's being cared for well,
Although just now confusion must impede
Relief, and multiply the horrors which
Will still continue to accumulate !

Ser. Nay, think not of them, Lucia. I fear
You ought not to have gone midst them at all.
Such sights and sounds scarce suit your gentle heart.

Luc. They hurt me not, in truth. I feel quite strong.
Stronger than ever I have felt before,

And anxious to return and be of use.
It must seem strange to you—to me it is
But entering again on daily work,
But bringing back my daily convent life.
It satisfies my heart as nought else could,
And makes me feel at home in the wide world.
I cannot think how I'd the heart to leave
When I was wanted most, when work began.

Ser. At all events, my child, you came to me
When you were wanted most. What with the monk's
Strong-urged demands, and Maria's complaints,
With the unlooked-for sight of my dear son,
I had almost foregone my self-command.

Luc. Oh! think not but that I rejoice I came;
By looking at each other's burdens, we
E'er think less carefully about our own.
I never shall forget your friendship now.
I was but wondering how I could have left,
At such a time, without more urgent cause.

Ser. But do not longer urge yourself to stay.
I mind not being left alone at all.

Luc. Dear lady, I meant not that;—forgive me.
Indeed, I could not leave until 'tis o'er.
'Tis awful to reflect how future days
All hang upon the tissue of this one.

Ser. [*walking to window.*] Oh! that I could but gain
a peep outside,
Beyond that broken fountain, cobwebb'd o'er
With darkling foliage, half full of rain,

And curtain'd by that dull, high wall ; one peep—
Were't for a moment—of the scene beyond,
Spread out in all its full reality ;
But one revealing glance—'twould satisfy
My hungry soul for aye. I would sit then,
Contentedly, in veil'd seclusion, here,
And wait with folded hands the longed-for end.

Luc. Might you not see, perchance, some horrid
sight,
Some dying Goth writhing in death's fix'd gripe,
Whose ghost would haunt you ever afterwards ?

Ser. Dost think a dying Goth would scare my wits ?

Luc. I know I should not test your strength with
mine.

I am so truly grateful I am spared
The sight, as well as that fierce feel of hate
Which nerves the soldier in the battle-field
To look with iron calmness through the fight.
I am so glad I've but to hear the end.

Ser. You're strong, through all your weakness, Lucia ;
And I, whom you call strong, am weak—how weak !
I would the end were past. If Stilicho
Could but feel now the strain his caution's caused,
He would delay no longer easing it.
And yet—who knows ?—the wretched messengers
May now be gaping at the happy news,
Or chattering to each other tales they've heard,
Or idly staring at the flying foe,
All careless that we're getting stifled here.

How I wish now I'd let one captain stay
To bring the news. I could have trusted him.
I'll have fresh messengers sent forth at once,
And threaten death to all who dare to lag.

Luc. Yet think you not the town itself would speak?
Each housetop, standing place, each battlement,
Re-echo voices shouting out the news?
Each thoroughfare be passed by running slaves
Striving to be the first to bring us word?

Ser. Oh! would that I were free to run with them,
'Twould cool the burning gallop of my blood!
The minutes seem as tho' they stretched themselves,
Staying to spite me, 'stead of passing on.

Luc. Could you not join with me in one short prayer,
To raise your thoughts above this hour's sharp rack,
To Him who orders it—ascend the mount
Beyond the storm, and see it rage below—
Look down, as hence from out eternity
You will look back, upon this pinching hour;
How petty, midst infinity, 't will seem!

Ser. I could not pray, 'twould be but mockery.
A weight, as 'twere, oppresses all my thoughts;
But that passed off, and victory our own,
My heart would rise in gratitude indeed.
Is it not hard I can see nought, tho' here?
Nought, tho' my maids can feast their will—tho' they,
Dear Lucia, have no stake hazarded!
But, Lucia, I'll tell you of a dream,
A frightful dream, that haunted me all night.

You'll tell it not, dost hear, to any one:
Nay, child, I know you'll not—but list! I dreamed
We'd all of us the royal purple on—
Th' imperial robes themselves—I knew not why,
But as our right. Well, victory was ours,
The Goths were scattered, and we all released:
The town—I know not how—was peopled full,
And all the nobles beamed with flattery;
I see them now, plain as I saw them then,
Waving, bowing, and smiling as we passed.
The Emperor and Stilicho weren't there,
And, strange to say, I missed them not at all.
That vision went, and I awoke, as 'twere,
And found we'd been defeated—found all lost.
Oh! Lucia, that awful, moveless feel!
That all the Goths were bursting through the town:
It seemed an age before I heard their feet,
And, with a start, awoke in very truth
To find it but a dream. What did it mean?

Luc. My dear lady, 'twas but a fevered dream.

Ser. What did it mean? Can't be that Stilicho's
Away—why should I flinch the word—is dead—
Ay, dead—and barren victory but ours?

Luc. Nay, think not so. Oh! think not so indeed.

Ser. The Chamberlain could bring no news of him!

Luc. He would, had it been so; would he not, now?
Oh! think no more of that. I'll sing to you—
You'll let me sing to you—to cheer myself?
We'll try if music cannot reach and loose,

Despite our will, our great anxiety.
I heard the song from a dear sister's lips,
Unwittingly, when waking her one morn,
And pressed her 'till she kindly taught it me.
They're lines she must have writ herself, I think ;
She sang them to an old, old tune; they're these:

SONG.

The sun suns himself in the sea;
The moon meets her light in the lake;
The birds burst with song in the brake—
No silence keep they:
Then why should I too not awake?
Why sorrow for sorrow's sad sake?
Why love not, though none will love me?

Tho' none seem to care for my care,
Yet none feel my fingers with fear;
A lone couch is not a lone bier;
I'll stand not at bay:
A mother ne'er heeds a cross tear;
A hostess hoards not her good cheer;
Tho' fading, a rose is e'er fair.

I'll pour out my heart's hoarded store
For those that can yield no return;
The heart of the heartless shall burn;
My love shall ne'er stay—
To yield it up all will I yearn,
The blessing of blessing to learn,
That God will restore me the more.

[*Distant shouts heard.*]

Ser. Great God, what is't? Oh! that I could but see.
Can't be my dream was true?—and the vile slaves
Are all too timorous to bring the news?

Enter Chamberlain.

Cham. Hail ! well, your royal grace, 'tis victory !
The Goths are flying and dispersed. The bridge
Is forced, and Alaric and all his camp
Are captives in the hands of Stilicho.

Ser. and Luc. together. Thank God ! [A pause.]

Ser. My noble lord and son untouched ?

Cham. Beyond all danger now, your royal grace.
The noble lord Eucherius was seen,
As they were leaving, hasting to the gates.

[Loud shouts heard near.]

Enter MARIA.

Mar. What is this horrid noise ? When first we
heard 't,
It shot us through ; we thought it was the Goths.
Why are the boisterous slaves not stopped at once ?

Enter EUCHERIUS.

Euch. All's well, throw up another cheer, my men.
You ladies now can show yourselves as erst.
The country's clear ; the sturdy vagabonds,
Having poured out their blood as freely as
The rain clouds dropped their rain, are vanishing,
Quick as the passing clouds clear off, away.

Mar. And the bright joyous sun once more beams
forth !

Euch. To meet the bloody water-pools' foul glare
Thick scattered, as some shivered mirror's face !

Mar. Oh! talk not so, and on this holy day.

Ser. Praise God, my boy, my blessing was not vain.

Mar. Let us throw off dull gloom—'scape this sad place—

We never shall be cheerful while we're here.

Ser. 'Twas a fell thunder-storm, but all the Goths
Are gone! 'Tis well too that so many fell;
They sought our lives and justly lost their own.

Mar. Why say so if they did? 'Tis——

Euch. They fought well.

Ser. No foolish pity has been shown, I trust.
Where is your noble father, my dear boy?

Euch. Still on the field, directing the pursuit.
He bid me tell you that he could but rest
This night at Asta. Alaric's escaped.

Ser. Only this night? But I'll not ask for more.

Mar. The foolish messengers brought word to us
That he and all his camp were in your hands.

Euch. So we all thought; for Stilicho himself
Led on the troops which took it, and beat back—
After a long-continued doubtful fight,
In which he used, himself, his sword on foot—
The fierce attack for rescue which was made.
Yet, strange to say, altho' before they closed
Around the camp, brave Alaric was there,
When search was made for him, 'twas made in vain;
And now we know he guides their host once more.
The rain-mist must have hid him from their eyes.

Mar. The empty nest then 's all that you have ta'en?

Euch. We've got his wife, who had your things, and camp,
Full of our spoil, to grace our triumph with.

Mar. My things! What, all my things? That is good news!

Ser. The victory—the victory is all!

Mar. How strange to have a woman captive here!
I wonder what this Gothic beauty's like?

Ser. Dost think the Goths choose wives for pretty looks?

I thought you called them big-boned squaws just now.

Euch. My lord has bid me tell you to afford
Such welcome to her as befits your guest.

Ser. My guest! She that e'er mixed in their rough camp,
And hounded on their chieftains for our blood.
Who is this wife of Alaric's forsooth?

Luc. A sister Christian in captivity.

Mar. Ay, and a queen—for Alaric's been crowned.

Euch. She is a woman—surely that's enough.

Ser. The wish of Stilicho is quite enough,
And shall be listened to until withdrawn.
You'll not return. You'll take some food, my boy?

Euch. I shall go seek a bath's refreshing rest.

[*Exit EUCHERIUS.*]

Ser. I will attend to bear the Emperor
Congratulations on the happy end,
Accomplished by his arms, of this drear siege.

Mar. You'll just have time, I think, to see him, ere
He 'gins to robe for mid-day luncheon hour.

I must myself make ready for it too.

[*Exeunt SERENA and MARIA.*]

Luc. And I? I will go back to hospital,
Whate'er insults I may again receive.
Yet, if the men were gross—so gross—before,
What will the wounded be in torture now?
Oh, for a mother, or a sister's aid—
How gladly would I follow what they'd say,
Sure of not doing wrong. But I'll not grieve.
Let me see, now: I can give out the stores,
And then I need not take my maid, poor girl!
I'll take two others and a double guard.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.—*Rome—public way—open space. Soldiers in double lines slanting across the stage, with the plebs beyond them on each side. A few people join in the crowds, and many hundred Senators on horseback gather about.*

Enter LAMPADIUS and a Senator, meeting in front, on horseback.

Lam. Well met, my lord.

Sen. 'Tis so, my lord; good morn!

Lam. Good morn! You look as gay as e'er you did.

Sen. Thanks to your gracious aid.

Lam. Nay, name it not.

You are too grateful in recalling it.

Think no more on't.

Sen. Hast heard that Alaric
Has been repulsed before Verona, where
He made a mad assault?

Lam. I'd heard it not.
Ah! tried to snatch success e'en from defeat,
To foil the victor spite his victory,
To oppose him in all things to the last—
'Twas worthy any loss he had to pay.
By Jove! it shows a Roman strength of mind.

Sen. Fortunately they were prepared. My son,
Who's with the force,—you know I was obliged,
My lord, to let him have his headstrong way,
Fond, silly youth,—sends word 'twas whispered in
The camp, the noble Stilicho had gained
Scent of the course that Alaric would take
Almost as soon as he'd determined on't.

Lam. Indeed, 'tis curious; it strengthens much
A weird report that's passing now about,
Of some hid understanding 'tween the two!

Sen. Ah! tell me. Alaric and Stilicho?

Lam. Nay, not so loud; I know not now the source
Whence first I heard't. I doubt not 'tis mere talk,
The offspring of some scandal—strengthened, too,
By the persistent fact, so curious,
They're always fighting, and yet never slain!
Our noble general to-day drags on
In captive chains the image, not the man!

Sen. He's got his wife, dost think, my lord——

Lam. Hast heard

That Stilicho's refused the Emperor
To let her grace the triumph ?

Sen. Dost say so ?

Lam. Ay, on oath.

Sen. 'Tis most unheard of !

Lam. So, so.

Sen. Refuse the Emperor !

Lam. Nay, changed his mind !

It may mean nought ; all men indulge in whims
At times ; but 'tis a funny one, is't not ?

Sen. What can he mean ?

Lam. He only knows.

Sen. But what,

My lord, gains the most noble Stilicho
From friending Alaric ?

Lam. He knows alone.

Perchance, 'tis best to have a foe to beat,
To keep an army ever in his hand,
Ready for any use ; they're both barbarians :
Perchance 'tis royal sympathy ; if so,
'Tis awkward Stilicho is not yet crowned !

Sen. My lord !

Lam. His acts read up to that. To-day

He does but sit beside the Emperor,
As fellow consul in the triumph-car !

Sen. Is't so ? [*Aside*] I must be more attentive now.
Must double all my court. [*To Lam.*] His daughter,
too,
Will be our Empress soon.

Lam. [*to horse.*] Keep still, you brute.

[*To Sen.*] He would go on at once before his time!

[*Bows to other Senators, also on horseback, who stand about in knots.*]

Sen. So! I understand you, my lord; yet now,
Methinks, 'tis almost time to join the train,
And rally round our sacred Emperor!

Lam. Well turn'd! Our holy Pope will soon be
here.

Sen. My lord, I thank you for the compliment.

Enter another Senator, who joins LAMPADIUS and 1st Senator.

2nd Sen. Good morn, Lampadius, good morn, my
lord.

1st Sen. Good morn, my lord. Has your grey mare
improved?

2nd Sen. Thank you, it has. A happy change for
Rome,

Is't not—though our poor chariots must now
Roll 'long the sides, not sweep the centre of
The ways? 'Twill teach us all humility. [*They laugh.*]

1st Sen. A change of any sort is good, my lord,
But this the best.

Lam. As Rome's loyal Senators,
We e'er shall gladly greet our Emperor.

[*Aside*] Great Jove! he does not take me for a spy?

2nd Sen. 'Twill rouse us all.

1st Sen. It has. You see the Plebs,
How thickly massed they are?

2nd Sen. What legs they have!

I'd stake this mare, but some of them have stood
Just where they are throughout the whole night long.

Lam. A happy change; 'twill save for weeks their
backs

From growing sore from too much laying on;
And let the wind sweep clear the porticos,
The baths, and gardens, colonnades and halls,
And e'en, perchance, their own most frowsy nooks.

2nd Sen. May't sweep the clearings in the Tiber's
stream,

And not, as 'tis so apt to do, o'er us!

1st Sen. Though hard to lay, 'tis worse to raise the
wind!

Lam. (*laughing.*) Our friend may fairly boast of his
success.

1st Sen. (*bowing.*) To you; but we shall soon be
boasting yours.

Your show of fireworks is it to last the night?

Lam. The night? Nay, all the nights! I'll have
them bridge

The day's decline on to the morrow's dawn.

1st Sen. And banish darkness to the tomb of myths.

Lam. Unless the rain should put them out. I've
learned

From the philosophers there'll be no moon.

2nd Sen. What high days they will be to the dull
louts!

1st Sen. One long continued gala day from this
Great triumph to the feast and circus games,

After the marriage of the Emperor.

2nd Sen. They'll see almost as much as we e'en shall.

Lam. More and more easily; we make our shows
For these most worthy Roman citizens !

2nd Sen. Thank Jove, the Emperor, and Stilicho,
We show to-day on horseback, not on foot.

1st Sen. 'Twas formerly most ignominious.

Lam. I wonder that our worthy ancestors;
Whom no one fancies he can praise enough,
Thought it not so.

1st Sen. Wise wrinkles require years.

2nd Sen. Besides, they had no Arab mares to ride.

1st Sen. Ay, the last triumph was some time ago !

Lam. Yes, and the imperial presence, too.
I was a lad when Theodosius
Passed in the triumph-car 'long this same way.

2nd Sen. Why, 'twas not back so many emperors,
That they themselves were Pontiffs of Jove's fane,
And our most holy Pope an unknown priest.

1st Sen. The times are changed, indeed. Hast heard,
my lord,
What the base pagans think of the decree
Forbidding them to sacrifice ? What's that ?

[*The crowd at the far end of the stage shout
against the troops.*]

Lam. The fools are mad ! They're rushing on the
troops !

2nd Sen. Where is the Præfect ?

Lam. Where's our holy Pope ?

[*The Nobles ride about disconcerted.*]

2nd Sen. Look, there's the Præfect dashing up the lines !

1st Sen. They rage at him. Great Jove ! there'll be blood spilt.

Shall we haste hence ?

(*Shouts from crowd.*) Blood ! blood ! They've murdered him !

Curs'd, cursèd Pagans ! Back, for mercy's sake !

The gladiators ! Hurra ! Down with them !

Hold, Præfect, hold ! The Pope !—the Pope and monks !

[*The POPE in a splendid chariot, with several Monks on foot in attendance, passes across the stage (the Senators saluting) to the excited crowd, who shout round him, but are ultimately pacified. Meanwhile wounded men and women are carried across the stage past Senators.*]

Monk. (*passing.*) Move gently, brothers, or you will shake out

The little breath that flits about her yet.

Men (*carrying body.*) So please you, father, 'tis an empty corpse. [Pass out.]

1st Sen. It really is a pity that this way,
Which soon will bear so fair a show of war,
Should now be blooded o'er by the foul plebs.

Lam. They should have waited till the games began.

2nd Sen. It damps one's appetite, like falling rain
When all the fountains spout up to the sky.

Lam. Here comes the Pope.

Enter POPE returning.

The Pope. Lampadius, my son,
And you, my lords, good morn.

Lam and Sens. (*bowing.*) Your Holiness !

[*Other Senators gather round LAMPADIUS and POPE.*

Lam. We would deplore th' unpleasant greeting
which,

Upon this happy morn, you've just received;
But that we know your holy love of Rome
Makes grateful to your heart all sacrifice
By which you aid the meanest citizens,
Much less the pleading word which saves their lives.

The Pope. Your sympathy, my lords, is dear to
me

On this sad dawn of an auspicious day—
A day which was to herald in our peace.
Is it not awful all this blood was shed
Because a frightened cur got wedged between
The gaping lines of legionaries ?

Lam. Is't possible ?

The Pope. The people pressed to see
What moved their fellows lower down the lines
To laugh and shout before the Triumph came ;
Sway'd 'gainst the troops, no doubt improperly,
Were driven back, and a new convert slain

Perchance, as urged, by accident—God knows !
The Christian crowd, half 'raged, half frightened, clos'd,
And gave the Pagan troops their plea for blood.

Lam. This Pagan triumph shall not be the end.
The laws guard o'er the meanest Roman's life.

The Pope. The martyr's blood e'er blooms, and ne'er
in vain.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Your Holiness, all wait your greeting at
The city's new-placed gates.

The Pope. Are they yet there !
My lords, so please you, we will thence at once.

[Exeunt POPE and Senators.]

Enter three Merchants.

1st Mer. How consummated now is our good luck ?
Th' imperial triumph's not begun.

2nd Mer. 'T has not.

1st Mer. And this is Rome ! These the legionaries
Whose very name guards thro' the world, awes even
The restless desert tribes who know no fear——

3rd Mer. But loss ! Those priceless Arab steeds
came thence.

1st Mer. Priceless, indeed ; and they were brought
from thence ?

2nd Mer. Your little eyes will soon be opened so,
They'll have to take a journey 'fore they'll wink.

3rd Mer. You must use both your eyes whilst here.
or you'll

Be saved the burden of your jewellery.

1st Mer. Why, how? What mean you? Stay, I have it safe.

2nd Mer. Then keep it so.

3rd Mer. And show not where it is.

2nd Mer. Now all the public officers are here,
And all the thieves are banded in the ways,
We might have brought our packs and wares on here,
Unnoticed and untributed, as food,
At once, instead of waiting for the games.

1st Mer. I'll go and fetch them, an you wish me to?
I can't mistake the ways, they are so straight.

2nd Mer. Nay, if we go, we go all three.

3rd Mer. Besides,
'Tis now too late.

1st Mer. I thank the gods we're here;
A fig for Ostia, say I. Who knows,
The market may be better still next week!
I would not lose this sight for all the wealth
Of Syria.

3rd Mer. Nor all the other wealth
You have not got.

2nd Mer. Of which he is so free.

1st Mer. Nay, if you come to that, my little goes
Ever as freely as your greater store.

2nd Mer. My greater store—dost hear?

3rd Mer. 'T has turn'd
out well

We stayed, as I desired, to take our meal?

1st Mer. It has. I'll own I was impatient there.

2nd Mer. It saves your fretting now. We might
have starved

Before we could have gained provisions here,
Away from the strangers' quarter of the town.

3rd Mer. We ought, as usual, to have brought our
own.

1st Mer. The shops are all closed up, but think you
gold

Would not have opened them?

2nd Mer. To strangers, ay.

3rd Mer. They'd fear some trick, and smell the
rabble nigh.

I wondered where 't had gone, till we got here ;
We met not one vile beggar on our way.

1st Mer. And none of all these masses ever work !
How sad, to think that Roman citizens,
Sons of the men who gave law to the world
And broke the stubborn nation of the Jews—
Nay, the home poor of those who now keep peace
From India and Persia to the seas—
Should uselessly infest these sacred haunts,
Should prey upon their mighty capital !

2nd Mer. On all their capitals—a mob's a mob,
In Antioch, or Alexandria,
Or Rome.

3rd Mer. They're not in Britain, Gaul, or Spain,
So bad as here.

1st Mer. But then they're smaller there.

2nd Mer. Smaller? Ay, by my faith, no nearer match

Than drivelling Tiber is to rising Nile.

3rd Mer. Or cheese-bred mites to colonies of ants.

1st Mer. That's scarcely a similitude to please
These worthy citizens of ancient Rome.

3rd Mer. And yet the capitals engross all trade!

2nd Mer. The provinces are so unsettled now.

1st Mer. Look at the noble marble palaces
And the blank window-niches, to be soon
Enjewelled with the living statuary
Of all that's most adorable on earth—
Is't not enough to fix one here for ay?
This sight we shall behold must e'er remain
The crowning glory of the ages past,
The fixed despair of all the future ones.

2nd Mer. The ladies will show well enough to-day.
And so they ought, their very smiles mint gold.

3rd Mer. We can't complain, for they don't keep
it long.

1st Mer. They are the very lifeblood of our trade.

3rd Mer. Mark well the dress the future Empress
wears.

1st Mer. Empress of Rome!

2nd Mer. You're mad upon the word.
This morn at daybreak, ere we mealed, you'd fret
To go to Rome, as tho' 'twould run from you;
Then, when 'twas small upon our distant sight,
"And that is Rome," you'd cry; and when its size

Was lost amid its many roof-crowned hills,
"And this is Rome," "and this is Rome," you'd keep
Repeating, as a pedlar does his cry.

1st Mer. Keep on, keep on,—it hurts me not. I'm
rapt!

3rd Mer. 'Twould be but prudent to keep back some
store

Of wonder in reserve.

2nd Mer. Until he sees
The ancient forum, with its offsprings round,
Forming the lap, as 'twere, of all the hills,
Fringed by basilicas and temples hoar,
Triumphal arches and the pomp of Rome,
Crowned by the palace of the Cæsars near.

3rd Mer. It lies, does't not, beneath the Palatine?

1st Mer. Oh, let us on; our time is wasting here;
Let's see the triumph there in the best place,
And Stilicho, the famous warrior.

3rd Mer. His very name's an army in the north.

2nd Mer. What say you?

3rd Mer. Anywhere but in the crowd.

1st Mer. Where can they all be hived? they're num-
berless.

[*One of the mob withdraws past Merchants.*]

1st Mer. Would you inform us, worthy sir, the time
The imperial triumph is expected at
The ancient forum?

2nd Mer. Or the palace gates?

Cit. The ancient forum or the palace gates?

3rd Mer. Its destination, wheresoe'er that is.

2nd Mer. I've not a sestertius with me here.

Cit. Am I cased in a gold-embroidered toga? do I hold a long stick—a wand; and, lastly, am I paid for using them?

1st Mer. We know not, worthy sir.

3rd Mer. Our thanks. Good day.

2nd Mer. They said that it would pass the Clovian bridge.

[*Exeunt Merchants.*]

Cit. The stingy, money-gripping traffickers, they couldn't squeeze a sesterce—not a sesterce—between them all, couldn't they? *I'd* have told them, if their old cunning eyes had had but trust enough to suck a lie—ay, even a lie. [*Laughs.*]

[*Sits down on door-step, and eats bacon. Soon afterwards another Citizen sits down on stones, a little way off. After some silence—*]

Cit. Well, old bones, I should say your eyes were as tired as my jaws.

Old Cit. Was I watching you? My eyes so often settle down they don't know where [*looking aside*], as my poor old limbs are glad to do, my son.

Cit. My son! How do you know I'm your son?

Old Cit. How do I know you're my son? how do I know you're my son? Why, as you know your sons, although [*sighing*] they don't know you; the gods guard over them.

Cit. Drop that, you venerable old sneak; I know

you better than you think. Why, only yester's morn, I heard you breeding lies of me to Plaucus's lickspittle. " 'Tis sad he is so pitiless, so monster-hearted, I might almost say."

Old Cit. No, no, no, indeed.

Cit. And you'd to get everything for his "abandoned brood." You know 'twas what you coked. Now, listen while you've still got breath. Remember that those brats were never mine. Dost hear? or——

Old Cit. I spoke to Plaucus's under slave. 'Twas after all the clients had left: 'twas so. It's true—I did; but not as you have heard. Oh, no! not as you thought you heard. I know good Scæva, he is my friend; 'twas thus, believe me, on my dying oath—I am a poor old man—I must have used your name. I went to see if I could ever get a chance of having any of the clothes or food which the great prætor, Lord Lampadius, gives away (praised is his name). You know my bread-tickets are so often stolen, so often taken from me—I am a weak old man—and good Scæva, before I left——

Cit. Said anything to get you gone, as I would now. How came you here at all? I suppose to bribe, with grovelling toil, "an honest sesterce," as it's called! You came here to work! That's the tale, isn't it? Ha, ha! If you want to work, why don't you do what you did yesterday? or are you come to rob your fellows with your poor wry face and very woman's tongue?

Old Cit. I'm out of place in all these grand sights——

I know I am; but then I thought I'd like to see my dear young general again—I know he wouldn't know me.

Cit. Wouldn't know you! [*Throws remainder of meat away.*] I've had my fill, and the dogs may have theirs.

Old Cit. May I have it?

Cit. You have it? Of course you may—you know you may, you old hypocrite; you'd have had more, if you'd open'd your jaws before.

[*Old Citizen picks up piece of meat, and exit.*]

Cit. The awkward old brute, I'd have given him more if he'd have waited. I don't want any more just now. Confound that standing.

Enter Recruiting Sergeant.

R. S. Halloa! Good morn! How do *you* get on here?

Cit. Like legs!

R. S. Squatting?

Cit. Ay, when wise and inclined.

R. S. You know me, worthy citizen?

Cit. I do, worthy slaver.

R. S. I've got *you*, at all events.

Cit. Oh! no, you haven't.

R. S. Pooh! pooh! dost think you can escape me now? Wait—listen. I'll enrol you as a fresh name. Who'll know that you've deserted? Come—a bargain—there! Your name? [*Pulls out book.*]

Cit. A one-sided one ; I'll not own it.

R. S. It is not all your side, fool ! Can't see that if I took you for a deserter, I should lose my silver for enlisting you, and you would gain your stripes ?

Cit. I saw with your eyes before.

R. S. So you demand your stripes ?

Cit. Not yet.

R. S. You shall have them then, you fool !

[*Advances to seize him.*]

Cit. [*shouts.*] Hold ! ho ! Fellow-citizens, help !

[*Citizens gather round the two.*]

1st Cit. A slaver here !

Citizens. Let go, or by the gods we'll trample you.

R. S. Dolts, cowards, do you not see the troops ?

1st Cit. And do you not see, you fool, they wouldn't shift their lines to save ten thousand of your cat-like lives, you pale-faced slaver, you ? Let go.

[*Shakes himself loose.*]

R. S. [*aside.*] Disarmed, by Mars ! [*To Citizens.*]

Ah ! worthy citizens ! I'm glad you've gathered round. I wanted but an audience like this. Look you, who'll have some sesterces ? Now's the time. The empire wants your aid. Who'll help to save the State ? Who'll join the Roman troops ?—good pay and plunder too ! Who'll fight against the Goths ? Who'll follow the great Stilicho to victory and spoil ?

2nd Cit. Citizens, don't shout all at once.

[*Crowd laughs.*]

1st Cit. Who'll carry armour on a toasting day like

this? Who'll drag it on in drizzling rain across a soppy marsh, and keep it polished afterwards without a speck of rust? Who'll march in it all day and lie pinched up in it all night? Shout who?

3rd Cit. It's no manner of use, my slaver, trying to enslave us here. We're free, we're citizens, we're Roman citizens, and do what we choose; and we don't choose to be driven off like geese to the slaughter-house. [*A sound of an approaching band is heard.*]

R. S. Hark! hark! you've never tasted yet the glow of victory; and the great Stilicho (who's loved by all) will ever lead you to't.

1st Cit. Loved? Cursed you mean?

R. S. The general, most noble Stilicho, cursed? By the Emperor's own sacred head, you're mad.

1st Cit. He is. He works his men far worse than convict slaves, he thinks they're iron-jointed as himself, he spares them not in peace or war, he's stricter with them far in victory than in the battle-fight; the lazy-devil camp-tramps fatten whilst they fight. Who likes cold baths, long marches, arms for ever on? No, no, no! give us the amphitheatre and circus games. Let Stilicho stick to his barbarians; we know he likes 'em best.

3rd Cit. and others. The amphitheatre—ay, ay, the theatre.

R. S. But look you, citizens, had it not been for our great general, the Gothic tribes would now be swarming through these very ways with murder and with fire;

now you've your Emperor to give you shows and circus dances, and the amphitheatre.

3rd Cit. Let the nobles keep them off—they'll do't.

Another Cit. Wait till they come.

Another Cit. They've been a long time coming.

Another Cit. We don't mind them, nor any else.

Another Cit. We'd join them in the plunder part.

Another Cit. Ha! ha! ha!

2nd Cit. Why don't the nobles fight?

4th Cit. Ay, ay, let *them* fight.

1st Cit. Why do they show in the triumph if they don't join in the battle-fight? tell me that.

5th Cit. The Goths at Rome! Ha! ha! we weren't born yesterday.

[*Sound of band nears. Citizens fall back into ranks.*]

Another Cit. Go to your pay-place; don't take the shade of us.

Another Cit. Out of the way.

R. S. Think that your homes and families are safe—safe from the Goths.

1st Cit. What do you mean?

R. S. I say again, think of your feelings for your wife—your children—if the Goths had now been here.

1st Cit. I've neither, brute!

R. S. Then more's the reason that you should enlist. Look at the troops, would you not now like to be cheered like that?

[*Troops of triumphal procession pass along, chanting. They are cheered.*]

1st Cit. [*aside.*] By Jove! if those accursèd Goths were here, I'd take up sword and shield and join the ranks.

R. S. That's brave. Come join them, Braccus, none shall know.

1st Cit. Pooh! pooh! I'd not leave Rome to-day to save it from being sacked to-morrow.

[*Exit.*

R. S. You crooked imp! I'll have you yet, and you shall writhe for this.

[*Exit.*

[*The triumphal car passes with HONORIUS crowned and STILICHO bare-headed.*]

A Cit. Look! look! the pagans kneel as the Emperor's chariot goes by.

Citizens shout. The Emperor! the divine Honorius! Stilicho! the Consuls! Stilicho! The Emperor!

A Woman. Ah! Stilicho looked grand!

Another Woman. He'd got his armour on under his consul's robes.

Another Woman. He must feed well, he must!

Another Woman. Didst see the Emperor, how delicate he looked? He's a real Roman nobleman, he is, sure as the gods. Why, Stilicho looked like a gladiator!

[*ALARIC'S image in chains, with some captive Chieftains, passes.*]

Citizens shout. Where's his wife?

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Gothic Council Tent. ALARIO reclining at the head of an oblong dais covered with skins. Chieftains (about fifty) reclining on it clothed in furs. A total silence. Two or three Chieftains enter. When the last of the fifty has arrived—*

Alar. [*rising.*] Brother chieftains, to-morrow is the feast of all our tribes, when further war or a fresh peace with Rome will be declared; to-day we choose between the two. Let each loose forth his will, point out the reasons for the track he'd take. Let us all follow, each to choose the best. We have been beaten from the land we spoiled; the royal prey's escaped which trembled in our hand. But though they beat us back, they have not dared to follow us; they are still shaking from our shock, and press us now to be content with what we hurled the pike at first to gain. What say you, brothers? Has your rage passed off because Rome chooses now to stretch an opened hand, or does it boil afresh? Remember how 'twas closed just now—how 't may be closed again. Speak freely all, and know, what you approve, I carry out. A beaten chief, I speak not first. [*Sits down.*]

Ludovic [*rising.*] Brother chieftains, since we've

stood in Italy, this is the first war council that we've had. Why is this so? Our advice was never thought of by our king until his plans, our followers, and ourselves were overthrown, dispersed, or slain. [*Goths approve by clashing arms.*] Look at what's passed since we first pillaged Greece. You well remember the bloody day near Thebes. That was indeed a battle-fight—a battle-fight from the fresh morn the whole day long until tir'd eve; one hand-to-hand death-grapple for the victory, with scarce a pausing time for food. Chieftains could blood their swords, could lead their followers then. That was no threatening at arms' length, that was no flying from a fierce surprise. What though we lost the day! Did not the Romans lose their dead? Lie they not thickly as our own? [*Applause.*] And who grudged them our loss?

Alar. And who then led you through the Roman lines? [*Applause.*]

Lud. Your subtle self, ever so fertile in resource, so cunning amidst flight. When circled by the Roman serpent coils (their bloody hand too stunned to strike a blow), you led us safely forth! But why have let us get entrapped at all? And reaped you not full spoil from your o'ercunning craftiness? Were you not made our king? Were you not made the servant of our foe, the Roman Greeks? Did you not suck advantage from us both? Did you not try to bite your friendly foe? Have you not bitten us? [*Applause.*] Too cunning chief, did you not store up arms, and falter in the use

of them? Do we not know Rhadasius and his host advanced and fell alone? [Applause.]

Alar. We were not then prepared. Should not our tribes fight for themselves alone?

Lud. Why was no council called?—none till our bravest brothers were laid low, rusted by foul disease? Why were they stifled in a stagnant place, instead of struck like sword-sparks in the clashing shock of war? Did you not fear their influence and grudge their fame? Why did you shrink from joining with Rhadasius? Why have you never followed our advice?

[Applause.]

Alar. How could I, when no two of you agreed?

Lud. You asked us not.

Alar. You gave it ere I asked.

Lud. And you ne'er followed it. You'd talk with all—ay, talk, talk smoothly—and agree; obtain our views, but take your own at last. Were we not well nigh starved when we first entered Italy, despite the mighty preparations, till we'd sacked Lodi's stores?

Alar. 'T has been the only time we've ever wanted food—the only time. Think well of that. Did we not all believe the land o'erflowed with food?

Lud. Look back at Asta, too. Did I not urge our onslaught on the town? Did I not press myself to head the assault?

Alar. When we'd not e'en a battering-ram! When, from o'er-pressing haste, our siege-machines were left behind! When all our followers would but have fed

the arrows of the foe, and you yourself could but have knocked your head against the gates in rage !

Lud. Who'd not meet death sooner than run from it ? Who shrinks from death ? Why, we must follow him at last. Did I not thirst to meet our foe ? Was I not mocked with guarding lines which never were attacked—which men on horses worried and tired out ? Did I not have to fly with a dry sword, because you ran so fiercely from the bridge ? *[Loud applause.]*

Alar. I left it standing but to humour' you, who urged it could be held against the world.

Lud. I said I could have held it 'gainst the world. When I crossed Stilicho in Greece, he saw my blood, but never saw my back ; but, king, you fled e'er Stilicho had scarce advanced. *[Loud applause.]*

Alar. *[rising.]* Chieftains, 'twas no fair fight. The Romans on our left had crossed the stream all thought secure, and had surprised us all. You know that they were pouring from the town against our rear, whilst Stilicho himself and all his picked reserve were forcing us in front. Had we not fled at once, we should but have been driven 'neath his cavalry. I saw the battle was then lost ; I knew our host might then be saved. You must know well I longed for death to spare my eyes the sight—the cursèd sight—my wife a captive in the foeman's hands ; to spare my ears the widow-wails all cursing me. I spared my life to save all yours, and will not now be taunted with the gift !

[Applause.]

Lud. I taunt you not with cowardice in fight :
I dare taunt none with that ; but I do taunt you
with a coward's will. I say you are too subtle to
be firm, too fond of lies to stick to one course faith-
fully, too apt to dodge about to drive your way through
aught.

Alar. And run my head against stone walls !

Lud. Dost treat me as a fool, and say I urged thee
to ? But look you all to where his cunning leads. Look
at Verona's steep. [*Groans.*] 'Twas there I was to have
the burden of the fight—a chance of showing all my
followers how chieftains fought of old.

A Chieftain. We all wished that. [*Applause.*]

Lud. Methought that there there'd be no fence, no
play, no fool's fond trickery ; that our bright swords
would flash their tale themselves, and victory be grasped
at by sheer strength ; but no, the foe must be surprised ;
we must go past as if from somewhere else, and cross
the mountains suddenly back to the town : you know
the rest ; you know how we'd to watch our fellow-
warriors stoned helplessly, our bravest youths struck
down before our eyes by shapeless blocks of rocks
rolled from above ; you know the passage of that
narrow ledge, so steep, so slippery with our best blood,
with every crag above garrisoned and stronger than
ten thousand castle-walls—the awful yawn beneath ;
you know the long next day we had to roam about
those wastes, guideless and bruised, worn out and
nearly starved—and why ?

Alar. 'Twas the most cursèd, hellish treachery !

Lud. Then, king, why were you subject to it? why did you leave the straight way to the town, and trust us all to trackless mountain-paths?—to save yourself from a straightforward fight ! [Applause.]

Alar. Must we not either way have crossed the mountains? Find out the traitor, and you'll gain us all revenge. By the great God ! I'd have him tortured, slain, and all his kith and kin—not one of them should live—the hoary and the hairless-headed, all should fall—fall as we fell. Find but the traitor——

Lud. King, I have—'tis thou !

Alar. Great God ! my oath ! my oath ! my oath !

Lud. And mine ; but for it, I'd show thy traitor heart to all.

Cartax. [*rising.*] Brave Ludovic, recall thyself ; urge not an open quarrel with the king in council with us all upon the war. 'Twould be unseemly, and almost unknown e'en to my length of years. Think of the ancient chieftains of our tribes, of whom you spoke just now ; think that they're present in this tent although unseen by us, as erst they were in their brave earthly time, and shrink from vexing their high souls by pressing on your private rage amid our councils for the common weal. [Applause.]

Alar. I echo such a wish ; for Ludovic has let his rage o'ermaster him, and's rather to be pitied than chastised. Though vented on myself, I merely shake it off, not hurl it back on him as he deserves. Yet,

for the sake of you, my brother chieftains, I would ask him now, what's led him to accuse me thus? [*Applause.*]

Lud. You'd rather pity than chastise! I can believe't. You pity me! Why, king, you pity your hard fate that I escaped when all fell round me on those rocky hills.

Alar. Why say you so? Let all your fellow-chieftains judge; and if but three believe you are not mad, I'll throw this crown away, and wage my life 'gainst yours. [*Applause.*]

Chieftains. The proof! the proof! Speak, Ludovic! the proof!

Lud. Dost think that I keep minions to forswear themselves, or slaves to watch his secret messengers? I judge him by his life—his whole lifetime. I've watched him closely since he's worn the crown. I've noticed how he's rid himself of all our greatest warriors. Brothers! where now are Sartis and Tergardon? Ay, where now are Pant, Tregress, and Daut? [*Applause.*] Think who were round him when we entered Greece: look who are round him now! Give proofs indeed—proofs that would chain the subtle Alaric! I give the proof—I say 'tis true.

Lammax. [*rising.*] Brother chieftains! you have heard the proof that our crowned king is traitor to us all. I will now give disproof. I say it is not true; and lo! according to sagacious Ludovic himself, our crowned traitor is our loyal king! [*Applause.*] You strike your shields; but let me ask you all, Is it your will,

our king, because he is our king, shall sit there, bound to take the slander that's spit over him? Are each of us to crack our thongs about his ears so we touch not his back? Why is he, more than are our malefactors, to be prejudged—punished—not after trial by our priests, but when we choose, or rage, or hate? Who then will choose sit there? The o'erwise Ludovic—with look as wise as a dead fish's eye, with stamped determination, staid and touchy as a gouty toe—who rises spluttering in debate, as a damp log upon a roaring fire? Why, Ludovic, that idles so in peace and fusses so in war—who wants so much to be our king—think you how patiently he'd keep his seat, how meekly hear me say he had betrayed us all, when we and he were smarting from some check at Stilicho's strong hands! Oh! he would bend a gentle ear to all—an ear as gentle as a mother's to her first-born babe asleep! Ho! ho! he'd try to carry out the schemes you might propose as eagerly as followers at their first fray! Notice you not how meekly now he listens to my words [*pointing at LUDOVIC and pausing*]? What twins we all should be were he our king!

Lud. [*rising.*] Brother chieftains! will you not rise to rid me of this chattering minion boy of Alaric's? How came he here—a chieftain with no hair upon his face—who'd not drawn blood until this war began?

Lamm. How came you here, with your black scowl? A chieftain, with less wit left in your head than's in the handle of your sword, unless, indeed, you're blun-

dering now upon a stupid joke you cannot see? Have you been drinking up your spoils before you came, instead of waiting to get drunk before you left?

Alar. Peace, both! Whilst I sit here, our words must be about the war, and not about ourselves. [*Applause. LUDOVIC and LAMMAX sit down.*] Brave Ludovic, what is't that you propose? [*A long pause.*] We have agreed on nought as yet. [*A short pause.*] I think that the brave Ludovic, who has belaboured so unmercifully the poor dead past, should now attack the living future, which confronts us all.

[*A short pause.*]

Lamm. Who will propose that Ludovic be crowned?

A Chieftain. I say, that any of us can speak—speak when he will, and not be questioned by our king. Why should we be pushed with questions when we speak our mind? [*Applause.*]

Another Chieftain. And so be forced the way our king may choose!

Alar. What course are we to take?

Mal. Should you not, wise king! throw down the terms, before we take them up or hurl them back?

Alar. The terms are those we asked for at the first. Leave those to me. Do *you* say war or peace?

Mal. [*rising.*] Not so, indeed. My brother chieftains! how can we wage war without our weapons in our hands? how offer counsel to our tribes upon this proffered peace from Rome, whilst we are kept in blindness of those terms on which the peace is offered us? How

can we find a way ourselves, as we are asked to do, whilst our own king forbids us to pass o'er those provinces he says are his, which cross our course? The blind can't lead. We could but follow him. [*Applause.*]

Alar. All know the grounds for which we went to war. We're still to keep our land; are still, each year, to feed the Romans with 5,000 youths of war; and are to be paid back the golden tribute for them time so long has filched, but which the Romans, ever false and treacherous, decreed that they had paid.

Mal. Our captive warriors and our captive arms?

Alar. They're to be given up. [*Applause.*]

A Chieftain. May we lay by our arms?

Alar. May we? ay, may we? Say you all?

Cartax. Have we not Stilicho's own word?—Stilicho's—no Roman's lying tongue.

Another Chieftain. But when you've got the gold, will it be broken for us all?

Alar. If we decide on peace, 'twill be divided, as all spoil should be, between the headmen of our tribes standing by the number of their followers; unless, indeed, the youths the Romans want do not spring forward in the needful time. You know the weakness of this chance.

Hackmond. [*rising.*] How's this? My brother chieftains, are our fingers itching but for gold, whilst the red life-drops of our brothers are scarce dry—whilst our own bodies are yet smarting from the sword-strokes of our foe—those herded beasts who're fit but to be slain, who

scarcely answer to the name of men? Shame on us all! I still have one arm left, and that one arm shall fight—shall still avenge my father's bloody corpse. What! Brother chieftains, shall we wish to carry hence the spoil we've snatched away, and leave our brothers' bodies rotting 'neath the foot-tramp of the foe who drove us back—who killed the dying—who defiled the dead? [*Partial applause.*] Dost think, when we are all dispersed in our own lands, pacing amidst our forests all alone, that we can then rest quiet in our homes, whilst taunted by the spirits of the fallen? Our braver women would cry shame on us, and steel themselves to 'venge their foul enormities. You, Ludovic, who thirst so for the fray—you cannot surely shrink back like a child at the first sight of blood? Recall your father's life-worn word, "Fight till you've won."

Lud. Give me a chief who'll take me to the foe! I'll ask him not to lead me back again.

A Chieftain. I care not who shall lead; but I must have revenge.

Two or three Chieftains. Revenge!—revenge!

Mal. [*rising.*] My brother chieftains! I think not that revenge should be our mark. We slew the enemy; what wonder, then, that he slew us! The longer that we fight the thirstier will grow revenge. In hunting, when we've gained sufficient prey, we bring it home to store; so now we've gained our ground, let us lay by the pike. I tell you, without shame, my own belief that all our bravery would fail, as it has done, against the Roman

Stilicho, despite our numbers and the 'vantage-ground we held. Stilicho is stronger and more cunning than our chief—though Alaric so fitly heads us all. The Roman legions follow him, as nose-tied strings of horses plod behind their first—and, refuse as they are, they fight. Let us take up this fair and most just peace now offered us, and strike our shields, that we've not had to sue for it. [*Applause.*] And then, my brothers, let us restrain and train our followers, as the great Roman general does his. Let us not lead again a herd of naked savages, who cast their skins when fretted by the heat, who mad themselves with Roman poison drink, and sip obedience when the battle nears. Let us enforce again the discipline that you, king, taught our youths. Let us all bear ourselves as members of our own long red-haired, blue-eyed Gothic tribes; and then, when God gives war, we may withstand its shock. [*Applause.*]

A Chieftain. Men will be men in war.

Another Chieftain. Unless the reins are loose, there'll not be any followers.

Another Chieftain. 'Tis no use fighting against Stilicho.

Another Chieftain. He always outwits us all.

Another Chieftain. Ah! 'cept when he crushes us.

Another Chieftain. 'Tis no use fighting against Rome whilst he's alive.

Alar. In power, you mean! One empire has rejected him, the other may—he is not Roman born!

A Chieftain. Roman or not, in power or not, he leads their army, and defeats our own.

Another Chieftain. 'Tis so ! 'tis so !

Haretell. [rising.] My brother chieftains ! it is so, and I fear 'twill ever be. All of us have not been, as I have been, in Rome itself, and seen the power these Romans hold. I never felt so awed as I did there. The more I saw, the greater awe I had ; and I ne'er saw enow, nor half, nor half a half their unknown power, their over-swarming wealth. There were their buildings, high as mountains piled ; their cities spread about with buildings as our forests are with trees ; their people numberless as are our forest leaves : all doing what they're made to do, and all well fed—fed without hunting, without war. And then their water houses moving o'er the sea, burdened with treasures armies could not bear. Think me not coward-hearted if I urge our peace with Rome. We're many, but they're many more, and yet they beat our many with their few !

[*Applause.*]

Alar. Yet all has not been loss. This Italy, of which we've heard so much—as richer than e'en Greece, with palaces enclosing villages almost, with gold not used alone for coins, but turned to cups and platters huge, or set o'er wooden works—has been despoiled, has fed us all the while. Its towns, so populous, have been destroyed ; its people cannot fight, and fall—the more the easier—before our arms, as corn, the thicker 'tis, the quicker do our women mow it down. Their

soldiers are dragged up from distant provinces, which melt away from their relaxing hold. And Rome now, as some hoary sinner, stands cumber'd with the wealth it cannot use, and will not loose—wealth which is withering in its nerveless clutching grasp. If war brings losses, too, to us, we can supply them—ay, and miss them not. Dost think, if we had been attacked, we should have waited as these Romans did—have let our villages be plundered, our old men be slain? War! so manlier far than the long tiresome time of peace, when women rule; than summer's hunting time, and winter's lingering feasts and fasts :—war, blood-throbbing war! who shrinks from it? Had we not better join in slaughtering the foul Roman pigs in war, than separate to kill ourselves in brawls in times of peace?

Lud. Plunder may please our followers, but does not fill us, empty with defeat upon defeat.

A Chieftain. We all like plunder, and our wives do, too.

Another Chieftain. If the Romans can keep their wealth, let them. If we can get it, let us.

Another Chieftain. How can the king know their provinces are stripped of troops?

Another Chieftain. He told us oft there were no troops in Italy but on the outward lines.

Another Chieftain. He found enough were there to beat him back.

Cartax. [*rising.*] My brothers, and you, my chief, think not that my tide of years has drowned my warrior

blood, altho' 't has washed away hot-headed haste. You know in fiercest battle-fight I shrink not from the front, nor hesitate to risk the little all of my remaining life. You trust me there: then do not hesitate to heed me here, where all my years, as harden'd and well-armed followers, do but increase my strength. My sons—you are my very sons, now that my dear boy's children are all gone—my sons, stay when you've fed enough. Mad not yourselves with drink for drinking's sake—with this most bitter, biting drink of war. You know I've lost my sole remaining ties, and now have nought to fear from its most deadly spite. Its fatal stroke would but cut loose the tether of my life, and set me free for ay. Life's but one long lone winter to me now. Yet, as an aged Christian warrior, I will not blood my sword to plunder gold, nor kill a fellow Christian man in sport, to show my manliness, nor try to heal a quarrel in my tribe, by hounding it to murd'rous boundless war. Brave Alaric, you know I am no coward, yet do I fear my God, and fear not saying so. Do thou be brave enough to grasp defeat—be wise enough to choose the substance, not the form—be generous enough to take, not give the peace! [Applause.]

A Chieftain. The gods have been against us all along. As I have told before to friendly ears—in confidence—after the war-feast, just before we trod on Italy, my wife received a warning in a dream. A monster with a mighty cavern's yawn was sucking up our people in his maw, and she was feeling that her turn must soon ap-

proach, when the beast's eyes met hers, and, with a shriek, she woke : that monster's war, the priests themselves say so. Since then, all through my bravery, I've been a coward. I'll fight 'gainst men, but will not fight against the gods !

Alar. Brave Cartax ! and noble as thou'rt brave, thy full ripe words are relished by us all. Thy wise advice would 'lighten even fools. The spirit from thy tongue is holier than the priests' ! I'm willing to pursue the course thou'st pointed out, and take this peace. [*Great applause.*] Yet, brothers ! as the head of all our tribes, I must defend the justice of our war. I say that when our women cry aloud for food, and die for the lack of it, and we feel, straight beneath our hands, a land so rich, so little used, as this, with heaped-up luxuries ransacked from the world, it is our very right to settle there. We must, we cannot run back to our fatherland. It was too full to hold us when we left, and numbers from it yearly swell our tribes. We must move on. [*Applause.*]

Mal. Illyria ?

Alar. We may as yet go there ; but that belongs, too, to the Roman power, and may be taken from us by the Eastern court. But chieftains ! brothers ! we now are offered back the lands allotted us by Theodosius himself, and so may justly take this proffered peace. [*Applause.*]

Hackm. [*aside.*] I must get more fresh blood yet. Brave Ludovic, what do you now ?

Lud. I leave to-morrow, never to return.

Two Chieftains. And I.

Hackm. Then so will I.

[*LUDOVIC and others descend from dais, when—*]

Alar. [*rising.*] Stay, brothers! stay, my chieftains! We must not leave Italy until we've had the gold—have had our peace confirmed. 'Twould shout our weakness to perfidious Rome.

A Chieftain. I will not loiter here.

Another Chieftain. Nor I.

Another Chieftain. I must remove my spoil.

Another Chieftain. I left my children at my father's home; I must away.

[*LUDOVIC and a few others leave; HACKMOND and the rest remaining.*]

Alar. Wouldst lose the gold you've fought to win?

A Chieftain. We'll meet again, if need be, to have that.

Alar. You Gothic chieftains, listen to your king. To-morrow, at the feast, are we to ask our tribes—our too divided tribes—to run away, break up themselves before the enemy, before the peace is gained, and be once more but scattered tribes of hunting men, or tell them they must keep themselves as one great nation all compact, who, in defeat, can still face Rome? What would you feel were Stilicho to dash on us at dawn? wouldst stay and fight, or flee like hinds away? [*Great applause.*] How can the nation last, the tribes agree? Dost like, yourselves, your followers to fly, to leave you guardless in the battle-field? You like them not, you brand them cowards, you take away their arms. And

I, your chief—dost think that I like *you* to leave me now? leave me alone to front the foe? for, know you this, that if you run away your king remains. Are all your boasts but vapourings? At the first knock-down blow you've had, do you run off for home? I've ever pointed on to Italy; I do so still, and with no idle whim. No! 'tis the very sight-point of my life! Come soon, come late—I've uttered it before—I'll find in Italy a kingdom or a grave. [*Great applause.*] Mistake me not. I've raised my voice for peace, and I will take it as I've said, and keep it too; but then how long? Ay, who can say how long? The noble Stilicho, my noble enemy, has been my friend, has given me my wife—my captive wife, and I am grateful for 't, and will be so. I will not break the peace: but he is old and I am young, and who can say how long this peace will last? My brothers, we must be prepared: desert me not; *I* never can leave you: say you'll desert me not! say that you'll wait until this proffered peace is gained! say that you'll wait with me to see that it is kept!

[*All Chieftains rise and clash their swords.*]

[*Exeunt all.*]

SCENE II.—*Senate-house at Rome. About twenty or thirty Senators; others coming in and out during debate. STILICHO in President's chair as Consul. Among Senators assembled, LAMPADIUS on extreme left near a side door.*

Stil. O venerable fathers of the State !
This day your wisest counsel is required
To aid aright the gracious Emperor,
In his momentous choice of peace or war
With Alaric and all the Gothic tribes.
And glad I am that of these awful twain—
The gravest subjects brought for your debate
Since the high marriage of the Emperor—
I safely can advise the gentler one,
The one which harmonizes with the time.
I need not trace the lines of the late war—
They're cut fresh in the memory of all :
I'd rather lead you backwards to their source,
And point the boundaries of the former peace.
You must all recollect that these were set
By Theodosius, my late dear lord—
Your sacred Emperor—their conqueror—
Whose name must wake deep reverence in all.
Therein, Rome ceded to the Gothic tribes
Part of Dalmatia, which they'd o'errun,
And promised them a subsidy in gold
Besides, upon their rendering each year
Five thousand warlike youths as hostages.
Such were, in brief, the terms. The legions took
Their youths: your treasury paid out their hire.

Whence, then, the cause of Alaric's advance?
He urges this. The subsidy you sent
Was stopped midway, and never reached his hands.
Your officers protested they'd been robbed
By gangs of wandering Goths, whilst *they* declared
Your officers themselves to be the thieves.
On this, the one alleg'd disputed point,
The sacred Emperor, before he left,
Bade me to state he'd satisfied himself
The Gothic chieftain never had the gold.
Thus much about the quarrel's origin;
But here I feel I ought not to refrain
From mentioning the rapid far inroads
Made by these Goths in your fair Italy—
Inroads which led you to rebuild the walls
Of this your world-ey'd, world-ag'd capital.
I never knew of such a quick onset.
They dashed themselves impetuously on,
As springing waterfalls o'er aged rocks,
Down through the land, unwarned as 'twas unarmed,
And, swelling like a flood above all bounds,
Left far behind your ancient barriers—
Hoar barriers that scarce had e'er been used—
Islanded helplessly amid the waste.
Nor was their inroad but a sudden raid
To snatch at plunder, or burn down a town.
No! for their women and their children came,
And all their tribes. Their influx was most like
The steady rush of many-banded streams,

Of breadth enormous : pushing on their way,
Hasteless, wasteless, resistlessly, leaving
No gap before, nor lessening aught behind.
Such fearful onset, like a midnight squall,
Could not be met—it could but be withstood.
I was away in Rætia at the time,
Trying to settle there the barb'rous tribes ;
But the most gracious Emperor himself,
With the few legionaries he could gain,
Advanced at once, and singly stemmed the tide.
I followed with my troops, quick as I could,
And drove their hosts back to their ancient bounds.
The Emperor, thus answering sword with sword
Successfully, was willing still to grant
The terms his royal father gave to them—
Which he has heard they gladly will accept—
And bade me lay his views before you all
For your deliberation and advice.
'Tis not for me to finger out the good
Obtained by Rome in warding off these wars,
Where loss is certain, gain impossible.
Such needful sifting I may leave to you.
In asking your endorsement of such course,
I've but to state my own matured belief,
'Tis politic as 'tis magnanimous.
I therefore pray the Senate to agree.

One Senator to another [aside]. What does he mean?

The other. Poor Julius !

Former. Dost think—— He spoke most guardedly.

The other. He did.

Former. 'Twould have been plainer far——

The other. But why so plain?

Former. Well! well! the birth-time will arrive.

The other. It will,

A Senator. O conscript fathers! Much as I could wish
Some tongue more venerable than my own,
Seizing this happy opportunity,
Had first expressed, again, the praise all feel
Will e'er be owing to the Emperor,
And his great general the president,
I hasten, howsoe'er imperfectly,
To throw my chaplet at their conquering feet.
For their so well-known modesty of praise
Should not prevent your rendering them their due—
That meed of honour dear to warlike hearts.
Most noble president! trust me in this,
That base ingratitude is not my fault:
If you could read my inmost heart, you'd find
So great is my dependence on your strength,
That with my will you'd ne'er depart again
From Italy—no, nor this capital.
I therefore join the mover in his prayer.

Another Sen. O conscript fathers! I, too, rise assured
That no mere words of mine can trumpet forth
Sufficiently, the glad relief I feel
That this barbaric war is at an end;
Much less the sound of jubilee from all
At the great victories which free the State,

Which bring the Goths submissive to your feet,
And crown the Consuls with immortal fame.
But, after the short speech which you've just heard
From the last noble orator who spoke,
Whose provinces, you know, lie in the south,
Whose streets of houses crowd our city's hills,
I think 'tis due to those who, like myself,
Own some of the far distant provinces
Now ravaged at their will by savages,
To state the reason why I hail this peace
As such a happy boon to the whole State.
'Tis chiefly thus, to say it in few words:
Because it frees the troops from staying here—
Legions are seldom welcome visitors—
And, when the gracious Emperor sees fit,
Allows our general to pacify
Those distant countries, which support alike
Rome's private wealth and public majesty,
And so require protection at your hands.
I therefore join the mover in his prayer.

Returned Proconsul. O conscript fathers! Proud am

I indeed

To be once more a simple citizen
Of Rome, to 'scape the dread anxiety,
The dreary grandeur, of far government.
I've rendered to the gracious Emperor
The reasons which constrained my following
The legions he so properly withdrew
From out my province of Hispania.

L

'Tis not to these that I shall ask your ear,
Nor will I dwell upon my many risks,
The unknown fate of my coadjutors,
My strange adventures and discomforts dire,—
The vile disguises I assumed in town
To hide myself from native robbers' eyes ;
How in the country I was stripped of all
By savage Vandals speaking a strange tongue
That none could understand ; was almost starved ;
Nor how I gained the ship that brought me here ;
No ! nor the ruin of my own spoil'd lands,—
For all of these chiefly affect myself,
Would but detain you and the President.
'Tis of the troubled province I would speak
(Its cry for aid e'en rings now in my ears),
As peace will shortly close the Temple's gates.
Believe me, fathers, I'd not willingly
Strain aught beyond the humblest line of truth
To raise your anxious patriotic fears,
Nor would I prejudice your open minds
Against the province's true loyalty :
But very fear of truth drives me to urge
The strong opinion which I have matured,
That all the unused troops should be sent there
Without delay, or chaos will prevail.
The people left entirely to themselves,
All th' imperial officers withdrawn,
All ties of Rome unloosed, the tribute e'en
Left uncollected,—nay, our language lost—

I say the people will but be a prey
To the foul greedy savage Vandal tribes.
I therefore join the mover in his prayer.

Lam. O conscript fathers of old gloried Rome !
The noble president must not feel hurt
If, in the honest words my tongue may use,
Aught sounds more patriotic than it should.
This Senate-house, so dumb to alien ears,
Mocks me with voices of six centuries !
I shall not, as my brother senators have done,
Beg for the spoil when told to fight the foe,
But shall, as I was asked, debate the peace,
Not where the peace-freed legions should be sent.
And here I would entreat the president,
Whose quickest word in camp is final law,
Whose motion on the battle-field guides death,
And whose sole will prepar'd and then approv'd
These terms which you're requir'd to countersign,
To try to rein his martial spirit in,
Whilst I most humbly plead against his terms—
Terms, which to any empire less than yours,
To any foreign king or barb'rous prince,
Might for awhile, perchance, prove politic.
But first—so gratitude enjoins on all—
I'd voice again the ne'er sufficient praise
For those late victories against the Goths,
Which, if they have not eased your citizens
From fear of all barbarians, have yet
Left friendly tribes in place of warlike Goths—

Tribes which at least obey the president,
And take their hire from out your public purse—
Tribes which may still be needful for defence,
Whilst Alaric and all his Gothic hordes
Yet hang as rain-fill'd clouds to threaten you.
But in these terms you now are told to pay,
Not only your own citizens and troops,
Not only your allies, but e'en your foes !
You are to bribe the Goth with public gold
To rest contented with the land he's robbed ;
Pray him, when overthrown, to claim no more
Than when victorious he dared to ask ;
To save your blood by pampering his greed ;
To pension him for plundering your State !
Such are the terms, perchance, as you were told,
" Magnanimous as they are politic ! "
A course to be pursued by you,—Romans !
The descendants of the great Scipio,
The noble heroes imag'd in your ways,
The Cæsars, and the after emperors—
Those conquerors of all the world, between
The sandy deserts and the swelling seas—
A course to be pursued for Rome ! Rome ! Rome !—
Rome, the earth's weather-moulded mountain-top,
Standing apart in awful majesty,
Which, towering o'er all else, dwarfs everything,
Turns inland seas to mountain lakes, and lakes
To pools of rain ; sinks mountain-chains to hills,
Hills to mere boundary mounds ; shrinks mighty streams

And bossy forests far to spots and lines ;
Whilst the horizon circumscribes its base.
Oh ! rather than pursue such course for her—
Your country, lov'd as is a virgin child—
Do you, my fathers, if the worst must come—
If all these tribes of barbarous allies
Swell but your burdens, all these victories
But flourish a reverse—yield your own lives
And wait the Goths, as did your sires the Gauls,
Facing defeat in seated dignity !
Braving the hand of death without despair,
Endure a martyr's doom, not kill yourselves ;
Spurning dishonour with a mother's scorn,
Risk your own ruin, not connive her shame !
These terms are terms of servitude, not peace.
These——

A Senator [shouting]. Lictors ! what ho ! seize the traitor !

Lam. What, senators, open violence ! Fly—
Fly with us to the church ! Haste ! tell the Pope.

[Exeunt LAMPADIUS and a few others by side door.]

Enter four Lictors.

Stil. *[to retiring Senators].* My lords, fear not !
Return, my lords, I pray.

[To Lictors.] Lictors, withdraw. *[Waving them out.]*

How's this—what means it all ?

Who dared to call them in ? *[Aside.]* There's treachery.
Who called them in, my lords ?

A Senator [*near where LAMPADIUS was, to another near him.*] Who called? [*To another.*] Was't you?

The other. Was't you, my lord?

Former Sen. I—I spoke not. [*To another.*] Was't you?

Another Sen. Not I.

Another Sen. Was it not one of those who left?

Another Sen. It was. They rose about him as he spoke,

As if to see who 'twas, and then all ran. [*A pause.*]

One Sen. [*aside.*] A clever speech!

Other Sen. [*to former.*] A patriotic one!

Stil. Howe'er it was, it was a false alarm.

No one, my lords, need fear, in this your house,

To speak as freely as he dares to think.

All know I've often asked you to do so.

Go, one of you, my lords, and bring them back,

Explain their strange mistake, and pledge my word—

If they still doubt—in any, every way,

To satisfy their timid, needless fears. [*No one moves.*]

My lord Peripater, you're near the door.

Per. I gladly haste in such a happy task.

[*Aside.*] What does he mean? They're mad—they'll never come. [*Exit PERIPATER.*]

Stil. My lords, meanwhile, this strange outbreak, as sad

As 'twas unlooked for, need—nay, should not—stay

Your further grave and dignified debate. [*A pause.*]

A Sen. O conscript fathers of imperial Rome !
However much your private hearts are grieved,
Your public breasts should never show a sign
Of what they feel at this most painful scene ;
Nor even recognize in outward speech
That which I'm sure has sunk so deep within.
None of you dwell upon the body's ills,
So let none brood upon a madden'd mind.
When a fine Arab steed, of priceless worth,
Breaks from its fellows in the circus games,
And dashes both its rider and itself
Against the spina to destruction dire,
The piled spectators do not let the sight
Disturb their keen enjoyment of the race—
Their shouts or curses at their favourites :
But, when the race is o'er—the victor crown'd—
All that's offensive is at once removed,
And other horses strive for victory.
So, in this strait, the noble president
Most rightly bids you to resume debate,
And shut your eyes to what has taken place.
My lords, about these terms that you have heard,
I cannot doubt their policy at all.
Framed by great Theodosius of yore,
Approved by the divine Honorius,
And advocated now by Stilicho
Your gallant general and president,
To doubt their wisdom would but disprove mine.
I therefore join the mover in his prayer.

One Sen. to another [aside.] Whence is the subsidy
to be derived?

The treasury refilled?

The other [aside.] I do not know. [A pause.]

Re-enter PERIPATER.

Per. My noble lord, I grieve to come alone;
But they had gained the church ere I got there,
And, having closed the doors, were barring them.
I shouted out your gracious promises,
Urged it was their own shadow frightening them,
And told them to rejoin the house at once.
But all they'd answer was: "We will die here!"
In vain I said you'd sworn your Christian oath,
Had pledged your soldiers' honour, and your word,
To hold them harmless; they'd make no reply.
Ere I had left, a mob was gath'ring round,
Collected and excited by some monks,
Who thought you'd sent me to force in the doors.
If you wish this, no time should be let slip.

Stil. How could they think I'd break their sanctuary?
I did but wish to calm their idle fears.

[*Aside.*] Let him pursue his course, 't can lead nowhere!

One Sen. to another [aside.] The president's afraid
to seize them there!

The other. The news will spread o'er Rome within an
hour.

Supercius is leaving—see!

Former Sen. I shan't!

Other Sen. Nor I ! The president is watching him.

A Sen. O conscript fathers ! grieved as you must be
At the sad blunder that the prætor's made,
And grateful at the president's calm soul ;
Howe'er assured of his sound policy,
Yet in your wisdom you will not disdain
(As he himself has urged you all to do't)
To hear a word about one branch of it—
To pardon my presumption whilst I dare
Suggest a mitigation of one term.
Now I can truly say that all my years
Have borne no moral healthier than this :
There's worth in all, and danger in extremes !
No one can, therefore, deprecate the course
So violently urged by him who's fled,
Nor see its folly, stronger than myself.
Now I feel sure I may at once assume
That none of you can feel the slightest doubt
On any of the terms, save this alone—
The subsidy in gold you are to pay.
Not that I venture to object to it :
Such course might well displease the Emperor :
I merely now throw out a humble hint
For our most noble president's grave thought,
That nothing would so prove his victory,
Complete the chastisement of his foul foes,
Nor add such pleasure to your grateful heart,
As a slight lessening of this public charge.
I therefore join the mover in his prayer.

Another Sen. O conscript fathers of imperial Rome !
I rise to deprecate your forming frowns,
Whilst I delay your noble president,
And for a moment trespass on your time,
Altho' all needlessly, as you have heard
So many fluent sweetly-sounding words
Whispering wisdom from my noble friends.
I'll answer not the one presumptuous speech—
A speech as futile as presumptuous,
Against the motion now before your house :
I'll point not at the sight you wondered at—
The vulgar uproar that its speaker made :
I will but urge my word against its fruit,
Its only present fruit, the lord's advice
To take off something from the Gothic pay.
I know not, speaking from my own poor lore,
Where he has picked his precedent for this,
Whose banner he assumes, whose arms invokes;
But this I'd urge, that whatsoe'er it is,
It cannot guide you here, however right,
After the insult to your president.
No ! let that stay advice, call out your trust—
Your perfect trust—in his determined plans !
Nor will your gain be less by doing this,
Your treasury decreased by acting thus
With perfect faith and generosity :
For, see you not that when your purpose is—
Whene'er you choose—you can withdraw the charge,
And stay, not part alone, but all the pay.

I therefore join the mover in his prayer. [A pause.]

Stil. O venerable fathers of the State !

I am a soldier hardened in rough war,
Schooled by my own experience alone,
A man of deeds, and not an orator :
One who speaks only what he really thinks,
Advises only what he wishes done.
I shall not, therefore, answer words with words,
But simply tell you facts from which to judge ;
Facts which, I fear, must take you by surprise,
But which, I feel, 'tis needful you should know.
Four months ago the empire was in peace,
And, to all eyes, secure from foreign foes,
When the whole nation of the Goths rushed down,
As from an ambush, out the Grecian State,
And gained a lodgment near your very heart.
Rome's fate lay fixed within a few short weeks,
Scarce time enough to haste the legions out
From all the provinces, to call allies—
Both true and near enough—to the attack.
Rome saved, news came, too soon, the provinces,
Left all defenceless, were themselves o'errun
By their outlying tribes of savages,
Much as you've just heard Hispania was.
Rome's self is saved, but all its empire lost,
Except indeed in Africa alone.
What can be done ? From all its legions left
There is no other army but this one
Cooped up in Italy. To set it free,

Renew peace with the Goths and gain their aid
At any equal cost, is the first step ;
But do not shut your eyes, 'tis but one step—
One t'wards reconquering the empire lost.
To take the others, I must have much time,
Much treasure, many legions, and besides,
The concentrated energy of all.
Judge then my joy when the great orator
Lampadius urged you so movingly
To give your lives to save the faintest chance
Of Rome's dishonour, and my rage to find,
At the first fright, he ran to save his own !
Believe me that I can't exaggerate
The present dangers pressing on the State.
The enemies Rome has to fight against
Are not the soldiers of some foreign prince,
But the whole peoples of great warlike tribes ;
And the few legions which its wars have left
Are all too few, howe'er invincible,
Are melting, and are not replaced,—in short,
Form but a dead, and not a living fence.
I do not venture to abruptly ask
Your leave to arm the people or the slaves ;
Though, is't not strange—I dare not say how strange .
To me it seems—that your own citizens,
Instead of aiding, should but cumber you,
But moulder on in sordid idleness ?
Left to themselves, below your very laws,
Despised as much as fear will let them be,

They're guarded, fed, and kept amused, forsooth,
Although they'll neither work in peace nor war.
Such monstrous weakness can't be long propped up,
Cannot, at least, regain one province gone—
Romans must fight for Rome or 'twill be lost.
The warrior dead, his armour is but spoil.
But, fathers! if you are indeed resolved
To save the empire trusted to your care,
No risk, no sacrifice, can be too great.
I do not ask you to take arms yourselves,
Or trust them heedlessly in any hands,
But I do urge you for your own true good—
(And do not ask more than I've done myself)—
Rather to lay your private treasure out
In raising levies and in arming them,
Than buying the mob's voice with passing shows;
To spend the public gold in gaining, than
In merely celebrating, victories.
The seven days' feasting and the fireworks glare—
Toys which had special charms to me, but toys
Whose splendours were but smoke, their jewels ash—
After the triumph, cost the prætor more
Than victualling our army for some years.
The sum you sank, despite my well-known wish,
In raising the triumphal monument,
Would have supplied the army with its wants,
The troops with pay, the hurt with carriages.
I thought not to have urged you to all this,
At least until some plans had been matured;

But a bold speech provokes a bold reply—
Though he who should have heard it cared not to—
And, knowing common risks arouse all hearts,
I've freely opened the whole truth to you,
Assured the Emperor may count your aid
In all his troubles and perplexities.
I have assumed, as the debate has told,
The terms the Emperor's himself approved
Will be decreed in their integrity ;
I need scarce add, and faithfully fulfilled.
I claim now that these terms may be decreed.

[*All the Senators pass off the stage to the right,
following STILICHO.*

SCENE III.—*Apartments in STILICHO's palace, some twenty miles
north of Rome.—Morning.—STILICHO in riding costume.*

Stil. [*to Ser.*] 'Tis summer still—the morning is
quite blithe—

Its hearty greeting would refresh you, chuck,
Would give you elasticity and life;
If you'd but welcome it with open arms.

Ser. I'm glad to see your ride has raised your
blood.

Stil. Try one. 'Twould serve you better still. Say
now,

To-morrow you'll ride out with me again?

Well ! well ! I press you not. I've news for you—
Home news, that will hang about your heart, and
Kiss the colour to your cheeks.

Ser. News ! what news ?

Who has been out with you ?

Stil. Why, Claudian.

Ser. You frightened me !

Stil. I may, I shall do so.

Ser. Stilicho ! Not bad news ? I see 'tis not.

Stil. For you, yes. Claudian wants Lucia !

Ser. He—wants dear Lucia ! What—Claudian !

The leaden-ey'd, girl-blushing stammerer,
Who talks so when he should not talk, and dreams
So when he should ! He wants dear Lucia !
He, Stilicho ! What—Claudian ! A man
Who helps a slave while he offends his lord—
A lonely man, without a friend save you,
Without a penny, nay, without a house,
Much less a palace where she could reside !

Stil. He asked me if I thought it wrong of him
To dare sue such a prize. I've told him, No.

Ser. You have, indeed, surprised and frightened me.

Stil. It is too bad to have to wake you up !
You ladies' eyes outstrip a bold man's tongue
So oft, 'tis impudence itself when first—

Ser. Nay, joke not, Stilicho, 'tis very sad.
I thought the girl had gained more sense than that.
She visits at the convent less than erst.

[A short pause.]

[*Aside.*] 'Tis so! Yes, yes! Where can my eyes have been?

[*To Stil.*] 'Tis, therefore, he's so bitten his poor lips!

Stil. [*laughing.*] And will so soon be forced to bite his tongue!

I'm glad you think he's glanced her heart aright,

Seen with her eyes, as well as with his own—

May she have let him do't, as you did me?

Ser. Stilicho!

Stil. Fright me not, there's no one near!

You know I've ever been most grateful for 't.

'Tis needful openness. How can we tell

What thoughts are coursing through your busy brains,

Left idle midst your household handiwork.

[*Kisses her.*]

Ser. But, Stilicho, what'll Lampadius say?

Stil. Perhaps, for once, what he will really feel.

Ser. To choose a landless poet 'fore himself!

Stil. We make no choice.

Ser. We don't indeed. D'you know

Whom I had thought she might, perhaps, have had?

Stil. Nay, I'm not nearly wise enow for that.

Ser. Pooh! our own boy! She's such a dear good girl,

And, angel-like, does all her good unseen,

I know she'd make him happy if he asked.

Stil. Eucherius cares nothing yet for girls.

Besides, I'd sooner that Lampadius
Should see I let her freely have her choice,
Than dream I kept her from him for my boy.

Ser. Can you not see the difference between
Forcing her choice, and keeping it in bounds?
You still seem, now and then, half-barbarous.

Stil. I often think it's lucky that I am.

Ser. Nonsense! But wait—reflect! She's not your
child!

Dost think her father, if he'd been alive,
Would have considered this an equal match?

Stil. An equal match? No, but a happy one—
For Claudian's a noble-hearted man,
Is never servile, tho' most grateful e'er,
Although so sensitive, as brave as I,
And, whilst perhaps he's vain, he's humble too,
And modest, tho' a Roman citizen;
Besides, he has a loftiness of head and heart,
A faith in goodness, that refreshes me,
'Midst all the sneerings of our noble lords.
There is no other man that I shall miss
So much as him, if he goes quite away,
Tho' he's been but the comrade of my rides.

Ser. A fool will easily deceive them both!

Stil. Perchance, but not a knave.

Ser. True, Claudian

Is quite inquisitive enough.

Stil. He's more.

He has acquired—he is a learned man,

M

Full of the stored-up wisdom of the wise,
Quick in imparting it. He's made me think——

Ser. Just what he wishes, and to gain his ends !

Stil. His heart is tenderer than a woman's heart,
His will more manly than a man's. No, no !
He wants her, and methinks that she wants him.
She'll make him more a man, and gain herself
The noble power of ripen'd womanhood.

Ser. Well, well ! you do not know her wishes yet.

Stil. Ay, true ! You will not talk to her of this ?

Ser. Why not ? I like good Claudian enough—
Would sooner have him gaining her by far
Than any of the courtiers. I did
But think dear Lucia too great a prize.
'Tis overpaying one who's o'er-well paid.
She'd sooner give her wealth away, I know,
Than have it added to.

Stil. I must be firm—
I've promised Claudian.

Ser. Just as you please ;
It might, perhaps, have saved him a rebuff.

Stil. Then let her give it ; why should we again ?
I'll be earlier to-night. I must go—
Why, my secretaries will be asleep.

Ser. You never spare me any of your time,
And, even when you join me at our board,
You're moody ever with your business thoughts,
As though you were a poet spinning verse.

Stil. Too true ; but can I help it ? It is not

My choice;—this indoor work more wearies me
Than long forc'd marches over bad by-roads,—
So much there is to do, I feel, when in
The field, I ne'er can take my harness off,
And, now I'm here, I ne'er shall put it on.
What is't you want? can I do aught for you?

Ser. I want to talk to you on State affairs.

Stil. What is't that I can *do*—do you want aught?

Ser. 'Tis but a month, and you'll rejoin the troops,
And leave me all alone—perhaps for years!

Stil. I shall. I may. You know that we left Rome
To be as much together as we could,
Free from the courtiers and the city lords!

Ser. And you spend all this quiet time away,
And leave me altogether to myself!

Stil. But am I not obliged? Indeed, I am.

Ser. You're too engaged to give your wife a word!

Stil. You know not half the things I have to do:

The many offices to be revised;
The whole department to reorganize—
The posts refill—the varied changes make;
The number of fine lords I have discharged,
For peculation, incapacity
(Mere children held the highest offices),
For absence in the distant provinces,
Holding too many posts, for every fault
That centuries of sheer neglect could grow;
And all the others, whom I hoped would take
A timely hint, but found obtusely meek,

Until I ventured to be kind to them !

Oh, I'm not loved at Rome—nor do I love.

Ser. I saw it all whilst 'paled in Asta's walls.

Stil. I never can feel sure of an advance.

When I but turn my head, all's really gone.

And where's the end ? I cannot live for aye !

I draw the nobles to the Senate-house,

And make the citizens rebuild their walls ;

But though at the first they liked the change, now

Both must be yok'd and driven with the whip

To move at all. Indeed, except the Pope,

The monks, and their near followers, I know

No living, energetic power in Rome :

Nor will the people mix with the rough tribes

Of our allies, as yet, nor they with them.

Ser. Our prospects darken deeply on all sides !

I'll not be put off, now that I've begun.

You're not fagged *now*, and do not look worn out.

I know not why, but since the Emperor

And all the court have been so far away,

Clos'd in Ravenna's walls, I've had no rest

Of mind—no calm, no peace, do what I would ;

Wild waking dreams, against my utmost will,

Of many mocking, sad, heart-sickening fears,

Have wound themselves within my slightest thoughts ;

And that strange scene within the Senate-house

Has stirr'd them madly up.

Stil.

I'm sorry that

Lampadius was such a public fool.

I do not want to harm him, nor did I.
I can't entirely understand the man ;
Not long ago I met him in the ways,
And he was all respect—not sneakingly,
But sadly, honestly, as 't seemed ; but then——

Ser. 'Twas but his craft ; he crouched to jump the
higher——

Drew back, to bound the farther on—the snake !

Stil. But where can he be jumping to ?

Ser. He means.

Both more and less than what as yet appears,
Or he'd not hazard such an open step.

Stil. The other nobles were not men of note ;
The only independent ones were young
Roman residents, silly-witted men.

Ser. Were't not for him, I should think nought
of it ;

Where speech's allowed, gross licence is assumed.

But, 'less Lampadius is altered much,
He's not the man to lose his self-command,
Or be his passions' slave. It matters most
That all will think he's backed by higher power.

Stil. Then let them all think so, or what they like.

Ser. Lampadius still keeps within the church ?

Stil. Indeed, I neither know nor care at all.

Ser. Good God !

Stil. My dearest help !

Ser. Why, Stilicho,

The man may crawl into Ravenna's court !

Stil. He might, no doubt,—what then?

Ser.

What then—

what then?

Stil. You're ill, *Serena*—want society,
Want change. I ought not to have kept you here;
You miss the court and find but solitude.

Ser. Do not be foolish; I am better here.
Canst really think I've lived these forty years
Amidst society and want it now?
I've wanted yours the most, and had it least—
You must rejoin the court at once.

Stil. Impossible—but why?

Ser.

All's going wrong.

I know; I'm sure it is.

Stil. But why? [*A pause.*] Now why?

Ser. I see it is.

Stil. Now, now—my time's not mine.

Ser. You'd put aside the reasons I might give.

Stil. You should know best, you've had the Emperor
In your own hands; but I must see myself
The need, if I'm to leave my present work
Undone.

Ser. 'Tis no one reason, but the points
Of many ones, of all my dormant fears;
My child's misconduct, and the monks' strong hold
Over the Emperor and her, and then
Lampadius—

Stil. He seems to frighten you!
He's but a coward, as indeed all are.

But what could he do there?

Ser.

I don't know what—

He has grown friendly with Olympius!

I watch'd them both at Rome, when I so urged
Your sending off the monk. You'll never have
So good a chance again; whate'er you'd done,
'Mid the excitement of the marriage stir,
Whilst you were there too, present with them all,
Would not have been complain'd about.

Stil.

Is not

The Pope far more important than this monk?

Ser. Important! Ay, but 'tis in his own place
At Rome, among his order. Anywhere
But at the court.

Stil.

He's much influence there,
And everywhere, all over Italy,
O'er all the Christian world. Why, but just now
He's sent out letters to forbid all priests
And deacons, all the Church's ministers,
To marry! Ay, and they'll obey him, too!

Ser. 'Tis pride! 'Twill raise them in society—
The closest matron cannot fear them now.

Stil. I hope, indeed, 'twill prove but as you say;
Howe'er, it proves at least the Pope's great power.

Ser. You never should have asked the Pope at all.

Stil. Perhaps I should not; but I wished to gain
His friendship and his confidence, and, since
The outbreak in the Senate, where his name
Was openly appealed to by them all,

I think that I may say I've gain'd them both.

Ser. You were absolved for your unconscious sin
In desecrating Easter's holy day ?

Stil. I was too backward in procuring it.
The present ever fascinates too much.

Ser. You should have first dismissed the monk.

Stil. Well, well, but had I not the surest trust you'd
foil,

With perfect ease, the subtle monk's intrigues—
If he, indeed, e'er ventured o'er his line ?

Ser. But have you gained the Pope's entire support ?
He likes Lampadius ; do you now try
If he will hand him o'er, or hold him fast ?

Stil. I should not wish for either, if he would.
No, no, I'd sooner help him as I've done.
I had the sybil-books, old oracles
Preserved from the far Pagan times, destroyed.
He's asked me for my aid to put a stop
To gladiators fighting in the games,
And I have promised him to do 't.

Ser. That's all ?

'Tis strong support to beg for aid yourself !

Stil. I'd sooner help him thus, than change for
him

The Pagan præfect for a Christian one.
But time runs on—will have to be o'erta'en.

Ser. Olympius is now alone, unwatched—
The Emperor entirely in his power.

Stil. Why, Maria is there ?

Ser. Pray, name her not.

Stil. Besides, what power has e'en the Emperor?

Ser. What mean you, Stilicho?

Stil. Nay, I meant naught.

But, now I think of it, 'tis better far
To run no risks—one of us should go down.
You want a change, Serena; 'twould refresh
And do you good; 'twould help me more than aught—
Come, 'tis arranged; and if you chance want me,
'Fore I should meet you on my way to join
The troops, but send me word, I'll leave at once.

Ser. I've not the heart,—I cannot, will not go.
You little know the cruelty I've borne
From her, my flesh and blood. I hid it all,
But felt it all, and feel it now.

Stil. She's young,
Unwinnowed by world-care, unsoftened aught
By suffering. A fruit-tree must be pruned
Before it bears, the virgin earth well dug.
A girl's no woman till she's felt. She's heard
But laughter yet; what can she know of tears?
She's vain and proud? How can young girls use
power,
And such a power, as if 'twere not their own?
You must consider your more years.

Ser. I have.
I've tried to treat her as a sister more
Than as a child, all uselessly; she's proud
Of her new-gained position of Empress

As an old beggar of her 'customed seat
Upon the door-step near'st the market place ;
Will have no others by to share 't with her.
I, at dear Lucia's request, o'erlooked
The treatment *she* received ; I put it down
To jealousy of her far prettier face——

Stil. What ! canst think her dark melancholy face
Prettier than fair Maria ? You're hard
On those you love the most.

Ser. You know her not.

Stil. I ever found her fond of my rough cheeks,
And was as proud of her as if she'd been
My child ; I always thought her little ways
Far prettier than the other ladies of
The court, and quieter.

Ser. O you wise men !
She has increased her servants and her slaves,
As if the Empress of the Eastern Court.

Stil. Then let us have the fewer of our own.

Ser. The Emperor's a puppet in her hands !

Stil. Come, come, you can't object to meet your
child——

To help her, and help me, and all of us,
However much she may have raised your ire ?

Ser. I've told you, Stilicho, I do not go.
I've sworn that I would not unless she asked.
Were't not for our boy, I should be childless,
Stilicho !

Stil. Say not so ; 'twill all pass off,

When you're yourself again, as quickly as
A shadow, and as stainlessly, almost.

Reason must grow ; it can't be planted whole.

You must not, like the doctors, get enraged

'Gainst those poor sick they neither kill nor cure.

Ser. Doctors should leave when they're not listened
to.

Stil. Then I must say adieu ?

Ser. To go to court ?

Stil. I cannot, once for all. See to-day's work !

Despatches must be sent to the Eastern Court

And on to Egypt (it must yield more corn

And troops). The fresh Proconsuls must be named—

Men of some force—to many provinces ;

Besides, you know, I should not care to leave

E'en Rome for long, till all had settled down.

You know not what you ask. None seem to work

With me, I must do everything myself.

[*SERENA sinks down into a chair.*]

There's no real reason why we should go now.

I strike my tent within a month, and then,

Whilst there, I'll see all's straight. I'm Count, you
know,

Of the Domestics still—and should I find

Aught underhand or wrong, they all shall go,

However great ; meanwhile, distress you not—

The rats *will* scatter through old walls. Why fear ?

Ser. I can but hide it, and I'll try to do't.

Stil. My dearest help, think for a moment on

The men you fear. Lampadius!—the monk!—
E'en with the Emperor, what could they do?

Ser. Can't see? A speck within the eye hides more
Than a huge mountain does far off;
A crawling child may trip a giant up :
Who knows? The Emperor, so weak he is,
May be entrapped to do—he knows not what ;
And then, that supple Count Heraclian
Heads all the household troops.

Stil. Dost fear the Count?
A man without a wrinkle on his brow,—
The little grey-eyed, little hawk-nosed Count,
So courteous, whom I promoted to
His present post, because he could obey,
Though not command? The Count a general!
A man most utterly without resource,—
And Alaric, who never really is,
Because he'll never feel himself, thrown down ;
Who does his work and knows it's never done—
His enemy?—absurd! Why, at Asta,
He could not move upon the flying Goths,
Forsooth, until he'd had my orders to.
Had not his coolness afterwards retrieved,
Somewhat, his folly, I'd have punished him,
As I took care to tell him at the time.
You are not surely jealous of the Count?

Ser. Who dreads the lurking storm while the sun
shines?

I fear them all, but most of all the monk.

Stil. They cannot do without me if they would.
Whilst Alaric still threatens Italy
You will yourself admit all must be safe;
And, 'fore he leaves, I reach Ravenna's court,
Taking the gold, 'bout which we fought, with me.

Ser. I thought we were at peace with all the Goths;
Is Alaric so battle-thirsty still?

Stil. He's tasted our stolen fruits; his sword's unsheathed,
Altho' the terms of peace have been agreed.
Howe'er, he's friendly to *me*—too friendly,
To please the gossiping mendacious fools.
I'll see to all, but I must take my time.
Serena, I must go. You'll promise me
Not to torment yourself with idle fears?
Revive your strength against my leaving you,
To manage, as you've done before, alone.
Come—think of Lucia and Claudian;
That must be settled one way ere I leave.

Ser. Dear Lucia! I think she likes the man.
You should have seen her fright Olympius
At Rome one day. He told her Claudian
Was not a Christian man, which she denied,
Quite quietly; and there, as I then thought,
The matter dropped; but, some time afterwards,
In conversation on the Gothic war,
It happened so that Claudian remarked—
“There was one good, 'midst all the anarchy,
That Christianity was piercing it,

And spreading quicker than it would have done;
Though it was sad 'twas mixed with heresy,
And so, unaided by the holy church."
She listened, but said naught, until she saw
Olympius, then told him of 't, and, when
He 'gain asserted what he said before,
She seemed to glow with scorn, gave him one look—
A look which coloured deep his sallow cheeks—
Then shunned him ever afterwards, as erst
She'd done Lampadius.

Stil. And served him right—
If I may say so. She's a true, good girl.

Ser. When in disgrace, she'll bow to him again;
She is so fond of petting ill-starred men,
The little fool!

Stil. You meant that stroke for me?
But you'll oblige me, dearest? Have called out
My horse—our safest one—'t must now be cool,
And gallop off your clinging fancy-fears;
Go with Eucherius, he's naught to do;
I'll send him you, unless he's out of doors.

Ser. Let the dear boy alone. I offered once,
But saw that he preferred to be quite free.
My humours shall not check his spirits' flow.

[*Exeunt at opposite doors.*]

SCENE IV.—*A garden adjoining STILICHO's country Palace.—
Early morning—Daybreak.*

Claud. [solus.] She's not here yet. How cold the garden looks!—

But the horizon heralds forth the dawn.
How kind and bounteous, how generous
She's ever been—and my deserts how mean!
No doubt—suggesting frowns, no proud rebukes,
Nor dallying with any other men,
Have ever checked my eager fond advance.
Oh! that my life-long love, my daily care,
The pledged devotion of my every thought,
Could e'er reward her nobleness enough—
Might have the chance, at least, to show 'tis felt.
I feel—I know—her heart attunes to mine,
Yet shrink in doubt from such pure happiness.
Bold as I am in thought, in hope, in will,
I dread the contact with reality.
Would that she'd come—come, and strike home my fate.
When with her I feel sure that she is mine;
I can pierce through her fence of shy reserve—
Such sweet reserve as has a forest's gloom—
And move her with me, as I move myself.
But when away, whole dreary troops of doubt
Rise up, despite myself, attacking me—
My sole dependence upon Stilicho,
Which all the nobles make me ne'er forget,
My mean appearance, and my weaknesses,

My love of solitude, my loneliness !
My brimming, scarce-restrained, wilful heart
Preys on itself for barren nourishment,
As thirsty mariners fain drink the brine ;
And I am fever'd, parch'd, until once more
She comes and mans me with her blessed smile.
Oh ! I can never trust her half enough !
But then her wealth—yes ! would she'd not such wealth,
Or rather that I had to equal hers.

[CLAUDIAN *walks about.*]

Ah ! how the sun, like the first flush of love,
Gloweth forth in blushes, spreading all around
Its rosy arms, till it enwraps the earth ;
Acknowledg'd then, 'twill rise in all its state,
Full and serene, out-lighting other worlds,
Roofing, with its one crowning peerless gaze,
This open earth, and, warming it to life,
Will make its very shadows light though deep :
So, when the dazzling glare of passion's o'er,
With all its colour'd, burning, cloud-like dreams,
And love has risen clear as noonday sun
And warm'd our selfish mists away, how blest
To see each object's worth in beauty shown,
And feel for all a warmth unknown before !
Here shines my sun. Oh ! how her every move
Grows graceful as a flag unfurling in
The summer breeze ; her eyes peep lustrous as
The point of light upon a purple grape ;
Her smile warms as the sunrise, is as pure.

Enter LUCIA.

A glorious morn, fair lady, is it not?

Luc. It is, indeed.

Fair nature shows her jewels in the morn,
And should be seen, by those who love her, then.

Claud. May it fulfil our hopes!

Luc. I was in doubt almost it could be you.

Claud. How gay the supple courtier clouds now glow!
Receiving and diffusing the fierce rays
Of their o'erdazzling lord; as in his wrath,
His gage crashed down, they splint their lightning lance.

Luc. They are gay now, but will soon shift away;
Whilst these sweet flowers, if not removed, will spend
Their lifetime in refreshing us. 'Tis strange,
I often think, how few *respect* the flowers.

Claud. As few as do the poet's useless song.

Luc. They carry off their bloom, and call them theirs,
And care not that they die.

Claud. As men pluck off
Pure pleasures from their place, and find them fade
To vice—the flower gone, but not the seed—
Too soon.

Luc. That is, indeed, a sadder thought.

Claud. Too sad, dear lady, for your gentle mind.
Fair nature's loveliness looks best at home!

Luc. At home?

Claud. As all true loveliness must do—
You know I've lost *my* home?

Luc. And miss it much?

N

Claud. Much ! You knew my mother ?

Luc. Indeed I did,

But not my own—I scarcely even missed
My father's awing glance, so young I was,
When he too was removed.

Claud. Your trials shame
My o'er-repinning heart ; your store of grief
As far outweighs my lighter lot as does
Your other wealth my poverty ; although,
So vain we are, I'm pained to find it does.

Luc. So vain !

Claud. Nay, 'twas a base-born, selfish thought,
Now dead—ay, repented of. I'm grieved, pained,
To think of all that you've endured—alone !

Luc. There are some things, you see, that e'en the
rich
Must bear ?

Claud. As there are blessings they must lose.

Luc. Must ! There are many that are lost, but
which
Are those which *must* be so ?

Claud. You should know best.

Luc. I know of none.

Claud. None ?

Luc. None ! unless, indeed,
Freedom from cumb'ring wealth, itself, be one ;
And even that need not be lost.

Claud. How so ?

Luc. Wealth may be given up.

Claud. And yet retained?

Luc. Yes——

Claud. Could you but find one worthy to receive't!

Luc. Or, e'en, who would receive't, and care not for't!

Claud. And have you found one?

Luc. Claudian!

Claud. Thank you,

Oh! thank you, for that word, dear Lucia—

May I not call you so? Oh! how I've longed

To tell you what my bursting heart would say,

T' unfold my love-dream to your gracious self,

And hear in very words you scorn it not!

Oh! Lucia! your wealth is nought to me—

Poor as I am, I fear not asking it—

But your own self, your grace, your care, your love,

Are gifts too great almost for me to ask,

Dared I not hope they were already mine.

I've nothing but my love to offer you—

The love a poet's deepest heart can give—

Beside the favour of my noble lord.

I have not e'en a soldier's sword to give,

Though I had hoped to gain renown with one.

But, Lucia, that love will never fail

Whilst you can care for it, and give me yours.

Luc. You're sure—quite sure? I will not ask you
more.

Claud. Oh! trust me, too, in that! I am indeed.

I know myself enough—you know my truth.

In Asta, 'twas, my love first burst all bounds ;
Amid the siege's dreary length—when hours
Were years, and forms and manners cast aside—
I saw, through all the naked selfishness
Around, your daily life economiz'd
To multiply your many blessed acts ;
I watched your tender strength give such great aid
To the sick brutal men.

Luc. All were not so.

Claud. I know, I feel, what you endured. Your
smile

Ting'd my life's blood e'en then ; but when at last,
Wounded myself, I felt your gentle hands,
Heard your soft voice, received your kindly smile,
The vain dreams of my youth all fled aside,
And showed, in full reality, a prize
My life's ambition could not overrun.
I felt a holy dawn arise within,
Saw my way clear to purity of life—
A purity that Romans do not know—
Felt all my strength arise to live that life,
And then a yearning to unfold my heart
And blossom in the warmth of your sweet love.
Oh, Lucia ! since then I've felt alone,
As I'd ne'er done before. When far away,
I cannot think of any but yourself ;
When closest at my work, it is for you.
Feasting on beauty as a bee on flowers,
I lack your breast to hive my treasures in ;

Or, shrinking from some taunt, with angry eyes,
I crave your sympathy to make me strong.
I've tried to quench my love—I did, indeed—
Fearing the hopelessness of my poor suit.
I tried to put a blot upon my thoughts,
But found, my pyre once lighted, it was vain
To dout the taper that ignited it:
I found my heart was gone and yours enthroned.
I kept it—it was all I had to keep.

Luc. You tried to stay your love?

Claud. To ease my life.

Luc. I did so too. I might as well have tried
To bank the rising waters of the Nile.

Claud. God bless you, Lucia, for those sweet words,
I know I never can myself enough!

Luc. I've always felt alone, like you, till now;
I've had to keep myself apart, as 'twere
In shade, from all companionship and life
And exercise, until I've felt myself,
As I was called, contemptuous and vain.
But now, dear Claudian, I shall be bright
And brisk and cheerful, as a housewife should.
I've had no sister to share counsels with,
No brother to lean on.

Claud. I will be all—

All that I can be, dearest Lucia. [*Embraces her.*]

Luc. I was but fearing my own self, not you.
I shall be happier than I yet can dream,
Whilst I in any way can be your joy.

Claud. I see our happiness smile down long years,
As two bright mirrors, looking each at each,
Throw out long vistas through the far-off space,
So will our joys be shared and multiplied.
Oh, Lucia ! I feel they're endless now ;
For, though our lives were dashed with grief hence-
forth,

We know that at the last our brightest dreams
Will be exceeded by our waking bliss,
In the new light of the ne'er-ending day.

Luc. This world, indeed, seems all too happy now.

Claud. All that is fully good is truly joyous.

Luc. Despite my noble lady's kindness,
I had but heard of happiness till now.

Claud. And now it seems almost too great for us !

Luc. Pray God to keep us humble in our strength,
And true to Him, as well as to ourselves.

Claud. Though but for our own sake. The ocean
waves,

Retiring morn and eve, as if for prayer,
Yielding their store to Him, are soon restored
In the refreshed rain, to bless the earth ;
E'en so, affections truly given Him.
He'll purify and let us find again,
Increas'd tenfold, in His own time and place.

Luc. A noble thought, indeed, to feed upon.

Claud. How much less lasting than a noble life !
I cannot tell you what I've gained from you.
From seeing all your daily little acts,

I've learn'd to try to make my life my song,
And not my thoughts alone ; I've liv'd to feel
That wisdom is to do, and not to know.

Luc. Yet is not knowledge the best kind of wealth ?

Claud. Of wealth ? It is, indeed. Yet 'tis mere
wealth

To traffic here withal, mere earth-picked gold,
Part stamped of yore with our own image on't,
Part waiting to be found, refin'd, and shap'd ;
Yet in its place 'tis needful, if not good.
But then, when pure, 'tis so confined, so small.
Why, e'en the deepest knowledge of ourselves,
The highest knowledge and the largest too,
Which we short-sighted mortals e'er can glean,
When put to test, is but a happy guess
At what has been and what may likely be,
Beside His insight, who, e'er looking down
And seeing all, foreknows the future's birth.
As fellow-players we but guess the cards,
E'en when the cards are dealt, that others hold,
By watching those they have already shown ;
The game they'll play, by that which they have play'd.

Luc. 'Tis comforting to know that He knows all,
And lets us aid Him if we truly will.

Claud. It is indeed, indeed, indeed it is.
But I've been boring you, before your time,
Dearest, with my far-fancy wanderings.

I can keep nought from you, you see, e'en now !

Luc. Do not say so,—you ope me a fresh world.

Claud. An arid, fruitless, and unresting one.

Luc. It seems not so. [*A short pause.*] Are you not, Claudian,

Oftimes too humble at your own success?
You said just now you'd hoped to gain renown—
All soldiers do—in war. Now trust me that
You did. Every one prais'd your bravery.

Claud. Dear Lucia! I thought to do the State
Some good, to learn a soldier's duties, and,
Perchance, gain honour fit for you, besides
A soldier's post; but Count Heraclian
Would offer me no help except fair words,
Stood blocking up my way whilst praising me,
Though officers were wanted more than men.

Luc. But would not Stilicho?—oh, Claudian!
I had forgotten my great guardian.

Claud. Nay, dearest, tremble not,—he knows it all.
I mean, before I dar'd tell you my love,
I ask'd and gain'd his leave. He is my friend.
He is so noble, Lucia, that though
He gave me all I have, I had no doubt
In asking him for more than all, for you.
He gave me you—as if I'd been his son,
Not he my patron. His is no kindness
Kept in custom'd bounds, but the free thinking
Bounty of his heart. No! all we've to fear
Is her most royal grace.

Luc. Oh! fear her not—
Although I shall be leaving her alone!

One evening, ere her noble lord was free,
We had been chatting o'er my fav'rite plans—
She's very good to me, dear Claudian,
Lets me do what I will with all my wealth,
And, though she chides me, aids me all the more—
When she, to my great joy and secret fright,
'Gan talking of your wondrous "innocence,"
And, after coolly praising you—it seemed
As coolly as she'd praise her maid—she said,
"I'd sooner have him here than all the lords!"
I coloured so, I thought she'd challenge me.
I know, dear Claudian, she likes you much.

Claud. But you far more. You shake your head,
as if

You thought that were indeed impossible.
Oh! how the birds fling kisses in the air!
Come, dearest, come, your arm should rest on mine.
And now you'll tell me when you first loved me?

[*Exeunt together.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Apartments of OLYMPIUS in Imperial Palace at Ravenna. Evening—Light waning. EMPEROR seated at table on the right; LAMPADIUS standing opposite; and in the centre, beyond the table, OLYMPIUS seated in a recess in the wall.*

Emp. We fear it must be so, but trust and pray
You are mistaken both. We'll think o'er all,
And take your counsel what's best to be done.

Lam. Your sacred Majesty will not forget
It is a matter to be done at once;
Done and forgotten, not even thought of,
Lest in your dreams 't might make itself a voice.

Emp. What do you mean? We don't talk in our
dreams!

Do we, Olympius?

Oly. Most surely not.
Your sacred Majesty, the senator
Could scarcely mean the very words he used.
All he could mean was this—what must be done
Eventually, had better be done now,
At once, and thought no more about.

Emp. Then why
Said he not so?

Lam. Your sacred Majesty,
I would recall my hasty, thoughtless words.

Emp. Why have used them against us? Tell us that.

Why don't you answer? If you're to recall
Those words, how do we know you'll not recall
All else that you have said?

Lam. I dare not let
Your sacred Majesty be sacrificed
By drawing back the truth.

Oly. Your Majesty
I'm sure will pardon me, for your own good
And for the State's, in pointing out again,
There is the sacred letter of the Pope!
A man who'd dare assail God's holy church
To murder honest-speaking senators,
Would fear not to attack your sacred self,
All monstrous as it e'er must seem to us.

Emp. The letter from the Pope of Rome you read?

Lam. Your sacred Majesty.

[*Handing EMPEROR letter.*]

Emp. You must well know
We cannot call our secretaries here.

Oly. It is, indeed, the holy Pope's despatch,
And written with his own most sacred hand.

Lam. I know too well its every word is truth.

Oly. Your Majesty may now chance recollect,
As further thought so oft revives the past,
His subtle policy with Alaric.
I'll not refer again to his neglect
In keeping you informed of what he does,

Or of his never seeking your commands ;
In short, his keeping you a pris'ner here—
This your most gracious heart might chance forgive,
If only for the sake of your royal aunt—
But think upon his leaving you alone
At Milan to face all the Gothic tribes !
And, when besieged by them at Arles,
His only hasting up when he had heard,
How wrongly we all know, it was too late.

Emp. Indeed, indeed, we fear it is too true.

'Tis very terrible to talk of it !

Lam. Curs'd traitor-chief, to kill in one fell swoop
His wife, the Empress, and your Majesty !

Oly. Thank God, I should myself have fallen with
you !

Lam. All, all, all must have fallen, except his son.

Emp. [*aside.*] His son — the most unmannered
courtier.

Lam. To garb his greatness with the imperial robes !

Oly. Ambition's itch ne'er stays at its own blood !

Lam. Barbarians have ever bloody souls,
Souls which delight in blood for its own sake,
As wild beasts do who've baited on our flesh.

Oly. Not the high soul which dares shed blood for
God !

But how can we expect that infidels
Or heretics (he must be one, if not
The pagan brute, the mere gross worshipper
Of his own flesh) can keep from hell's own ways.

Emp. It makes us tremble when we think of it.

Lam. Of what he's scheming—of what may be—

Oly. May be! of what assuredly will be,

Unless prevented by the present means:

Let him but join the Goths, the empire's lost.

Emp. We're very high up here; how the wind
howls,

And that curs'd moaning of the sea keeps on!

Father, we cannot stay here longer now,

The Empress will be wond'ring where we are.

Oly. 'Twas nobly humble of your Majesty
To honour with your presence my mean cell.

Emp. And, good father, have you no other room?
Live here, sleep here, dress here, and meal here,
too!

Oly. 'Tis all too good, too large for my deserts.

Emp. Without a couch; ay, e'en without a bath!

Oly. I want them not, your Majesty; this flesh
Is not as domineering as it was,
Praise be to God.

Lam. Your sacred Majesty
Will seal this mandate with the royal ring
Before you leave?

Emp. [to OLYMPIUS.] We did not say we would?

Oly. Your Majesty e'er keeping the roy'l ring,
Would it not save your coming here again?

Emp. It would do so. We never thought of that.
Are you quite sure my royal aunt comes not
With Stilicho?

Lam. She would have sent you word,
Your sacred Majesty, did she do so.

Emp. You are quite sure, Olympius?

Oly. I am.

I cannot force a doubt, your Majesty.

Emp. Then we're not to—we will not—do not choose.
You think it better not, Olympius,
To seal it now, good father, do you not?

Oly. I do. There is no need to seal it now ;
The Count's appointment can come afterwards,
When Stilicho's vile scheme has been put down ;
For peace, praise God, now reigns.

Emp. It is well said,
Well said, indeed, good father. So't shall be.
We do not seal this mandate here to-night.
Is there aught else, good father, we can do ?
You'll join our after-supper meal 'fore prayers,
To taste some oysters from the British Isles ?
The Empress likes you to. They tell me they're
The last that we can have.

Oly. [*rising.*] Your Majesty's
Desire shall be obeyed. I will attend
And sue your pardon—'tis Saint Michael's Eve.
This should be sealed before your Majesty
Departs. 'Tis to enable us to take

[*producing a mandate*]

Defensive steps to meet all threatenings.

Lam. Defensive measures to withstand the scheme.

Oly. Your gracious Majesty, I'll read it through.

Emp. No, no, good father, trouble not yourself,

[*Wind roars.*]

Here is the ring ; we cannot stay, indeed.

[*Seals fresh mandate.*]

Lam. Your gracious Majesty will pardon me

If I presume t' advise you talk with none

About the mandate giving to the Count

The army and the other offices

Now held by the arch-traitor Stilicho,

Nor e'en about his treachery at all.

In fact, let nothing that you've heard be known.

Emp. My lord, I'll promise you. You may depend

On this ; I'll talk to no one but myself !

Oly. Indeed, now that the scheme's found out, there's
nought

Your Majesty need fear. Here you are safe.

Not all the world's barbarians combined,

Though led by Stilicho himself, could gain

An entrance here by force, nor, now, by fraud ;

So that your royal mind need not be vexed,

Nor let the exploded plot disturb its peace.

Lam. A foreknown trick is but contemptible.

Emp. We have no fear of the big Stilicho ;

Indeed we never had, never feared him.

'Tis dark outside—quite dark. We'll take your arm.

Oly. 'Tis like this life, a short, dark way to light.

Emp. We wish the sea was not so near to us.

[*To Lam.*] Good eve, my lord ; you must o'ercome your
fears ;

Here in this palace you may feel quite safe.

Lam. Your sacred Majesty, farewell.

[*Kneels and kisses EMPEROR'S robe.*]

Emp.

Farewell.

[*Exeunt EMPEROR and OLYMPIUS.*]

Lam. [*solus.*] How obstinately he kept fidgeting !
Our importunity was useless as
Our reasons were themselves. But let me see.
This mandate I'll keep safe, Olympius !

[*Takes sealed mandate.*]

You're welcome now to pride and saintliness,
To subtle doubts, to high-flown purposes !
You've done your work, and cannot now undo 't.
But wait, I must make sure, play a safe game.
Let's see. This other mandate is not sealed.
Will the Count stickle for 't ? He's apt enough ;
But then he gets the prize—the prize, he's sure.
He benefits the largest of us all.
Yes, yes, he's safe, though not o'er-eager.—All
Are timid but myself.—The only hitch
To fear is 'bout the Empress. Let me see ;
None can leave here without our knowing it,
The courtiers are all ignorantly safe,
The Emperor can speak to none but us ;—
And if he stops us, why we'll stop *of course* !
Then Stilicho's own troops are in the north,
And the imperial fleet's entirely ours.
Ay, all now hangs upon the day itself.
I don't fear that ; not Stilicho himself

Can awe the legions when they're mad with drink;
And I deserve to lose if they want that,
Or gold, and promises of plunder too.

Re-enter OLYMPIUS.

Oly. His Majesty has grown suspicious since
The Empress has been here.

Lam. He fancied
I was frighten'd and enrag'd 'gainst Stilicho !

Oly. He will do nothing that she's not approved.
I dar'd not volunteer, for their own sakes
God knows, to tell him what the mandate says
In very words, as he ne'er ask'd for it.
He *must* have seal'd it—he's but spar'd the pain
Of thinking on't. I've taken that myself,
And it is no light weight. But it is done.

Lam. Dost think the Empress is to be aught feared ?

Oly. The mandate was not seal'd ; she thinks nought's
done.

You still believe that there's some risk to brave ?

Lam. None worthy of the name.

Oly. I'm sorry for't.

Lam. You're sorry there's slight risk !

Oly. I am, I am.

Great God, to take away a life, one life—

You're sure there'll be but one—but one, I say ?

Lam. How can there be more ? 'Tis but Stilicho
Who seeks our lives. 'Twas but for safety's sake
We made the mandate sanction any more

That might be ta'en.

Oly. Thank God ! Were there one more,
I'd have no hand in it. One life to save
All ours—no, yours,—the Emperor's and all !

Lam. Mere self-defence ; he'll have but what he'd
give.

You must yourself be with the Emperor
At the review. I'll manage all the rest.

Oly. I do not this to save my life, but his.
I care not for my own, God knows—you know.
Have I one luxury to sweeten life,
One tie to bind me to't ? The dross I have,
Do I not give it all away, and beg
The very clothes that hide my nakedness ?
Would I not gladly throw my life away,
If I but saw my charge was safe
From the o'ermastering pagan heretic—
My charge, the one sole object of my life ?

Lam. 'Tis, holy father, so. I must away.

Oly. Where is the death-decreeing mandate gone ?

Lam. I have that safe.

Oly. Oh, you keep that ! Then I
Must keep the letter from the holy Pope.

Lam. You shall. I'll take your blessing when all's
done.

[*Erit LAMPADIUS.*]

Oly. Oh, how this world is moved by selfishness !
Yet, 'twould be madness not to move with it !

SCENE II.—*An open field near Ravenna.—At the distance, bodies of troops drawn up in various parts preparatory to review. In the front, underwood and trees. Time, about noon.*

Enter a Courtier to LAMPADIUS.

Courtier. I've lost my friends, good sir, I was too late,

Can you——Great Jove——why, 'tis Lampadius!
A bright propitious morn, my noble lord!

Lamp. The smoothest sward but coffins fatt'ning worms!
[*A pause.*]

[*Exit Courtier.*]

The fool was scar'd,—more than I meant, almost.
How men e'er hate to have their blinkers moved!
Why does the monk not come?—delay is death—
One falt'ring minute left to Stilicho
And our nice woven plans may be burst thro'.
He has been here an hour at least—to me
How many hours!—Full time to parley in,
And why? How quickly curs'd suspicions rise
At aught unlooked for. 'Tis the restless night
I've had. Curse to this waiting here for him!
I should have had more of the soldiers' drink;
It has scarce strung my limbs. This hiding crows
A man, makes e'en the open air give fright,
With none to back him, none to stand opposed.
And *I*, who've bearded him before them all,—
Him whom all crawl before! Ha! here he is
At last. 'Tis he! Olympius, you're late!

Enter OLYMPIUS.

Oly. We had to read despatches from the Pope
And Stilicho. Your plans are overthrown.

Lam. By Jove's great nod, what do you mean?—what
is't?

Oly. The Pope's withdrawn the letter that you've
brought,
And praises Stilicho as a true son.

Lam. The Pope! the Pope! But where is Stilicho?

Oly. At Rome. Ere he had started here, the Pope
Sent for him there to put the riots down.

Lam. Despatches read! Why did you let them be?
Why not have left and come to me at once?
But who is here? Who brought the news?—the gold?
I saw that that was come ere I came here.

Oly. Why, Stilicho, who left to help the Pope
Quell riots at the Amphitheatre,
He would not let the gladiators fight,
Sent on his son—

Lam. Eucherius is here?

Oly. Yes—yes. What of that?

Lam. Nothing—everything.

Oly. What mean you?

Lam. Maximus is not with him?

Oly. I do not know. No, he is not. What then?

Lam. What then!—things take their course.

Oly. What do
you mean?

[*Aside.*] The holy Father, too, to've been misled!

Lam. You'll keep the Emperor from Eucherius?

Oly. Why do you wish me to? Lampadius,
That mandate had now better be destroyed
At once; destroyed—it can't be used; for fear——

Lam. It will be wanted all the same. Ho! ho!
Fear!—I've no fears. Dost see, Olympius,
This sudden change will help us much—make sure
What was half chance before?

Oly. What would you do?

Lam. Eucherius shall fall to-day.

Oly. Great God!

What has *he* done?

Lam. He is his father's son.

Oly. Oh! visit not his father's sins on him.
Beware, Lampadius, if he's touched,
The Emperor, nay Stilicho, knows all!

Lam. Beware yourself of that, Olympius.
Pooh! they'll both know all in time. But listen:
It is too late to stop; time melts e'en now,
Or I'd explain. When galloping down hill,
You can't draw up midway, whoever's there;
The horses must have head. Ho! ho!

Oly. [*aside.*] He's mad!

[*To LAM.*] Give me the mandate up!

Lam. Retain it—yes.

Oly. What can I do? Lampadius, do list.
'Tis not two days; do nothing till he's here
Himself. Oh! do not touch the youth, I pray!
The Pope—the Emperor—I'd ne'er myself

Turn as you will, your shadow points one way !
You'll rage as helpless as the madden'd sea—
That trackless common where the wild winds graze—
Against the land-protected voyager.
Eucherius and Maximus laid low,
I'll go myself with Count Heraclian,
Not to the palace, but to Stilicho.
Ho ! ho ! I feel a giant on the rise.

[*Exit LAMPADIUS.*

Another part of field. In front, EUCHERIUS and Count HERACLIAN, on horseback : on left, a small number of mounted body-guard of EUCHERIUS ; on the right, Count HERACLIAN's staff ; further back, the household cavalry.

Her. It was most lucky for his Holiness
That your most noble father had not left ?

Euch. Ay. Heraclian, does the Emperor
Keep the monk always, dog-like, by his side ?
It seem'd most odd to me, as I came up,
To see the father mounted on the field.
I should have laughed, but that I pitied him
Too much, he looked so emptily sea-sick.

Her. Thou'st writ his living epitaph, my lord !
I know not why his sacred Majesty
Bid him be here to-day.

Euch. He must have been
A-penancing. Ha, ha ! unless, indeed,
'Tis in mere spite, to gain some wag's wild bet.

Her. He's like enough ; he brush'd against my horse

As I stood waiting for the groom last night,
Got mudd'd, and then threw an injur'd look
At me, glanc'd rueful at his injured gown,
And stay'd as for apology ; he kept
The mud upon him, holy man, to shame
Me afterwards—to show my sin! What's that?

[*Shouting heard.*]

Euch. The troops seem drunk !

Her. What can it mean ?

What is't ?

Euch. It can't be part of the review begun
Too soon ? See, there's the monk, the Emperor—
They try to stay the men.

Her. To stay the men ?

'Tis so ! They can't, they cannot stay the men.
I'll see myself to this. My dear young lord,
For your own safety's sake keep back behind—
Wait till I've led—

Euch. Wait till you've led ! Dost think
I've got my great aunt's blood within my veins ?

[*EUCHERIUS rides up to his guard, and returns
with them.*]

With you, my lord.

Her. This movement is most strange !
What can it mean ?

Euch. We go to see.

Her. Perhaps
I may be wanted here, they know I'm here.
Had you not better wait and see what comes ?

Euch. Wait ! see ! What's that ? They shouted
Stilicho !

[*Exeunt EUCHERIUS and Guard.*]

Her. Young fire-blood's gone. I'm free, whate'er
occurs.

I've had no orders to touch him. No, no !

Great God ! he's charging all, with his ten men !—

By all the gods he's through !—He's down ! All's o'er !

[*Walks horse up and down.*]

What can his father do ? 'Twas not my deed.

No, no ! What shall I do ? I will go guard

The Emperor. Who knows, these drunken brutes

May threaten him. Ah ! 'tis Lampadius !

Enter LAMPADIUS, and exeunt both together.

Another part of field. MAXIMUS, on horseback, in front on right ; heavy armed troops drawn up on left. At the back, on the right, a rise in the field shuts out view ; on the left, in the distance, outskirts of a forest. A long pause.

Max. The horse has taken fright ! Confound the
hill,

Whence did it come ? He urges the horse on. .

It's like—it is, one of my young lord's guard !

[*Exit MAXIMUS, shouting.*]

[*A pause.*]

A Soldier. These cursèd show-days. March—stand
still—march—form—march—stand still—all day long.

Another Soldier. Ah ! and in full trim.

Another Soldier. To march us right out here, with-
out a halt until we'd got to the very field.

Another Soldier. 'Twas cursèd hard. Did'st see the household do-noughts grinning at us as we passed?

Another Soldier. Put 'em inside our steel, and we'd have cause enough to grin.

Another Soldier. Give 'em a helmet and a shield a-piece, and march 'em in this sun where we've been to-day already, and if any of 'em could draw our swords at the end, we'd give 'em all our pay.

Another Soldier. The cursèd lazy louts! [*A pause.*]

A Soldier. Faber's confoundedly long.

Another Soldier. He's careful, curse thee! He's filled himself, and waits to come with them.

Another Soldier. You should have drained the brook.

Former Soldier. You should have filled your empty pate with it. [*They laugh.*]

Another Soldier. Where's captain gone?

[*Distant shouts heard.*]

Another Soldier. What's that? [*A pause.*]

Enter MAXIMUS with one of EUCHEBIUS' Guards on foot.

Max. I can't think what it means. Had he left them
Before it all began?

Guard. I do not know.

But, just before we charged, we noticed him
With some monk hurrying away.

Max. Thou'rt sure
The count's own cavalry joined in the cry?

Guard. As sure as that they're following me on here.

Great Jove ! they're there.

[*A few horsemen appear on the hill.*]

Max. Form—Form—quick, my men !—square.

[*Heavy-armed troops mass together in a solid square, with their shields over their heads, the former ones standing on the ground, forming one body of metal, with spear-heads between.*

MAXIMUS and Guard fall behind.]

Guard. I wish my horse had not been hurt.

Max. His death

Has lengthen'd all our lives. You'd ne'er have heard,
Nor could I have o'ertaken you. You're sure—
Think calmly of't, he's dead ? I would risk much
For him.

Guard. I only saw him down, myself ;
But all were with him there ; and when, once clear,
I could look back to see who followed me,
There was a head upon a pole, the mob
Of drunken troopers shouting round, below. [*A pause.*]

Cavalry appear and form on hill.

Max. My men, there's treachery abroad. Stand firm,
The prancing horse-legs cannot touch you then.
I'm safe behind you men. I know you well.
Stand firm, 'tis each for all, and all for each.

[*Cavalry charge down hill, but as they near the square they open and wheel off right and left.*

Max. Open back ranks, extend, front round ; re-form.

[*Heavy-armed troops slowly open and form a*

larger square, the troops facing all ways, slightly hollow, and enclose MAXIMUS and Guard, as a portion of the Cavalry, which had wheeled round to cut them down, gallop up. Officers urge on Cavalry against the square, and some horses are wounded with the pikes. They draw back.]

Max. Well done, my men. These lady-riders faint
At the mere sight of their own horses' blood.

[Cavalry manœuvre ineffectually.]

Max. Keep as you are, my men. Don't break your
pikes,
And a whole army of these flies may come.

[Cavalry draw back.]

Max. Now wait—If we go back, they'll have our
lives
For the mere taking. No ! I'll to the wood,
Wait there the day, set free the men who choose,
And then, no rest until I meet my lord.
Front and side ranks front round ; now, my men,
march !

[Exeunt MAXIMUS, Guards, and Troops.]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—STILICHO's Country Residence—Apartment in his Palace. Time, afternoon.

*Enter MAXIMUS, in riding-habit, to STILICHO, mealing at table—
Servants, &c.*

Stil. Why, Maximus! What brings you back? I'd
scarce

Believe the servant when he said 'twas you.

Max. My noble lord! I'm a sad messenger.

Stil. Indeed! 'Tis lucky that I'm here. I've just
Got back from Rome, and a rough time it was:
They would have had my life if they had had
Their will. I have not seen my lady yet.
A few hours later I should have been off
To join the army with my few allies.

Max. My lord, you must prepare for the worst news.

Stil. What is't?

[*To servants.*] You need not stay.

[*Exeunt servants.*

Is't possible

The Goths can have begun their plunderings
Again?—or has the gold miscarried twice?—
Or is the Emperor unwell?

Max. No, no.

Far worse than all. The troops have mutinied!

Stil. [*starting.*] Have mutinied!—against the Emperor?

Max. No, with the Emperor, against yourself,
And—and—slain my dear young lord.

Stil. [*rising.*] Maximus!

Max. My lord, would that he'd been my son, not yours—

Would that he'd been my son!

Stil. Eucherius slain!

Max. I should not have felt half as hard.

Stil. What is't?

What was't? Why, why! Is the world mad?

Max. I am.

I do not feel at all. I'll tell you all, calmly.
When we arrived, he went to pay his court
And hand o'er the despatches that he'd brought,
Whilst I was stationed, with my heavy-arm'd,
Far to the westward, where I could see nought.
The deed was done before my eyes were op'd;
And thus, as fate decreed, a guard of his,
Escaping on a wounded horse, pass'd near,
And was thrown down ere he could pass away.
I learn'd the household troops were mad with drink
And were all shouting death to you, when he,
Who, with the Count Heraclian, had left
The Emperor, hearing the cry, advanced
With his few guards alone, quite fearlessly—
As he e'er did—charged, and broke thro' them all,

When his horse fell, and brought all down on him.
It had been plann'd before. The Emperor
Ran from the field to let them work their will,
The troops, who everywhere join'd in the cry,
Not only were made drunk, but had been brib'd
With that same gold we'd brought up for the Goths,
Whose messengers were beaten off with threats.
The Count himself attack'd me with his horse,
The Senator Lampadius with him.
Howe'er my men stood firm, and so we reach'd
The wood that was close by, and there dispers'd,
Save the half-dozen that have kept with me,
Who manag'd to pick horses from the field.
I let them rest till night—a moonlight night.
The harvest-moon burned through the black blue sky—
The horrid calm, mocking, glares at me now—
And then, amid the rav'ning thieves and birds,
We search'd long time for him; the clear cold

moon

Shedding its snowy light quite colourless
Fix'd statue-like the stiffen'd twisted limbs
In white and shade—the blood was black—just like
The images the Goths left broke in Greece.
They must have kill'd each other in mistake
Or quarrelling, the corpses lay so thick—
I car'd for nought but him, and him I'd find—
I've brought his ring, I could not bring his hair.

Stil. His poor head gibbeted before them all!
I care not—he is dead—they'd but one sting.

Max. We passed th' encampment of the Count, 'fore morn,

The second night. He treads upon our heels.

Stil. Then let him come, what can I care? Perchance,

Had I been there, mine might have saved his life!

I know not. Leave me now, good Maximus.

Max. You scarce can realize the change as yet?

Stil. Realize the change? No—no more than if

[*pointing to picture*]

That Greek-daub'd warrior spear'd me from his frame;
Than if my wife's own doctor 'd poison'd her,
Or she'd been strangled by her maid; than if
These very walls were now to crumble down
And bury us because we'd built them not.

Max. 'Tis lucky that you kept th' Alani here!

Stil. Ah, my allies, I had forgotten them.

True, Maximus. Go, lead them out the town,
Pay them and feed them, and dismiss them all
With thanks and praise—*my* praise. And, Maximus,
For safety's sake, then send at once to Rome
And warn them there to close their gates. Poor men,
'Tis all that I can do to set them free,
They would not care to stay and share our risk.

Max. Send them away? Dismiss your only guard?
Why they will shield you till you reach your troops.

[*STILICHO waves hand.*]

My noble lord, all my life long I've tried,
As I best could, to carry out your will,

You're now o'ercome—struck down by very grief,
I would, I must arouse you from your dreams,
Or the stern outside world—but all too late—
Will break them roughly up. Look round, my lord,
Take facts as facts, and do your best for Rome.
The treach'rous Emperor must be depos'd—
You are Rome's consul jointly with himself.
The treasury is yours, and but assume
The royal purple, and the army's yours.
'Tis you alone can save us from the Goths.

Stil. Oh! mock me not; if I have had proud
thoughts,

They were for him. Ambition's ghost sounds now
Like outside laughter to a pris'ner's ears.
The empire palls upon my taste, as gold
On Dives dead, or as the empty ship
Upon the friends of its lost voyager.
It mocks me as Herodias was mocked,
When dying, with the gory head of John.
Grasp at the purple whilst my boy lies dead!
I could but use it for his funeral pall.

Max. But Rome?

Stil. Ah, Rome! 'T may fall with me.

I am

But one of all God's ministers; I'm bound
E'en now, waiting the sword-stroke, Maximus!
I cannot, at the very end of life,
Forswear my life-long loyalty to him,
My late dear master's son, I've ever serv'd.

P

Kill him, indeed, my benefactor's boy !
We've pledged our lives for him in battle oft ;
Then let him take them now in his own way.
And Rome, she'll well deserve whate'er she gets
From Alaric, a Christian king, at least.

Max. And you'll die now for this crown'd murderer ?

Stil. What does it matter when we pass this life ?
If late, 'tis soon. 'Tis how we use it, man !

Max. You will not then avenge his death at all !
I might as well have sav'd myself this haste,
And let my head been taken quietly ;
I might, perchance, have fell'd Lampadius,
And should have gone to rest then satisfied—
'Twould have provision'd me for the long fast.

Stil. Revenge ! O God ! defend me. *Maximus*,
There is their sword still dripping with his blood !

[*pointing*]

I'll take it not. O God ! blood, blood—such blood
As would turn sick you Roman soldiers' hearts !
Leave me alone ; go now, go hence at once !
I'm bloody, all too much, myself. Go—go,
Maximus—go you at once to th' allies ;
And, *Maximus*, protect my lady here.
She's all alone, e'en Lucia is gone—
I will not hear a word. Go hence—hence—hence !

[*Waves MAXIMUS out. A pause. STILICHO walking
up and down.*]

O thou great God ! who madest man, and gave,
With all Thy other gifts, an inner sense

Of right and wrong—some portion of Thy love
For right, some little of Thy wrath at wrong—
Canst Thou, almighty Emperor of all,
Allow the fellest wrong to gloat o'er one,
Who, trusting in Thy guiding might, us'd not
The weapons in his reach, the strength that Thou
Vouchsafed to him, to fortify himself,
But to advance the work he had to do?
Thou know'st I've ever tried to do the right
To Thee, and to my fellows too, and yet
Thou lettest their vile hands be ministers
Of awful chastisement to mine and me!
Thou—All-Sufficient—Thou must pity me!
Oh! strengthen me to bear this awful stroke;
Show by Thy vengeance 'twas not by Thy will.
Do Thou, when I am gone, Thyself protect
Her whom a double stroke leaves lone to Thee;
And pardon, Lord, my bold, my raging heart.

[*A pause.*]

My life leads nowhere now, but to the grave.
One bitter moan with her about the past,
Dragging the veil from off his murder'd corse,
And all is over here, all objectless—
It is her step—God help me now indeed!

Enter SERENA.

Ser. Are you ill, my lord?

Stil.

With the saddest news.

Ser. And, like myself, have scarcely touch'd your food.

Has aught gone wrong at Rome?

Stil.

Have you not heard

That Maximus has just return'd alone?

Ser. Maximus! What do you mean?

Stil. [*walking about.*]

Has return'd.

Ser. Alone? My boy—the Emperor's not hurt?

Stil. The troops have mutiny'd, and slain our friends,

Ser. Our friends—you frighten'd me—the boy's not hurt?

Stilicho, he is not hurt? What do you mean?

Stil. Look there [*points to table*]. Your ring.

Ser.

His ring!

You murder him

Before my eyes. He still is flush'd with health,
With the full strength, the beauty, of his youth.

Oh, say he is! Stilicho—he is, he is!

He is not dead—oh, say he is not dead!

Wounded, sore wounded—bleeding, but not dead!

[*A short pause.*]

Stilicho, you're strong and mighty, great

In arms and war; you've e'er been kind to me;

Oh, help me now! Oh, give me back my boy,

And I will be your very household slave

For you to trample on! You'll give him me?

Stil. My wife, our boy is in the hands of God.

Ser. [*after a pause.*] What right had they to kill
my boy, my own?

Did I not bring him forth and suckle him?

Was he not mine, my own, my only son?

Dead?—Gone? It cannot be! I should have felt
My heart's blood going too, and curdling dead.
My life was all express'd—pour'd out in him;
My hopes, my ever-murder'd hopes, but rose
For him; my idle dreams were crowning him.

Stil. Serena, you're a woman. Give way—cry!

Ser. Cry! I shall no more cry than laugh again.
A woman! ay, whose husband lets her son
Be kill'd—away! whose daughter's married to
His murderer! How can that mother cry?
How hold her head henceforth—be seen?
Dost think I've queen'd it o'er my matron friends,
As th' Imperial Aunt, or as your wife—
Or that I'll take their pity now he's dead?

Stil. Their pity? He died nobly, as he should,
After he'd broke them all in victory,
As warriors wish to die.

Ser. You'll mock me too!
He died—was murder'd—just as you would wish!—
Whilst he was struggling vainly for his life!
His beauteous body mangl'd o'er with wounds;
The archèd temples of his head broke in
Down to his looking eyes. They're looking now—
No hand to close them. Why, my burning heart
Would warm to life his pale, cold, pallid clay!

Stil. Serena, God Almighty spared His Son
From heaven for us to kill, and shall we grieve
That He has taken ours from out this world
To Heaven, to give him everlasting life?

We must all live for others, not ourselves.

Ser. O God! O God!

[*A pause. SERENA rises to leave.*]

Stil. [*staying her.*] Dearest, arouse yourself;
Cling not to despair, that can do no good.
Let us pray God to help us help ourselves,
For danger presses now on us.

Ser.

On us!

Would have me stuff my flesh as you have done,
Whilst my poor boy lies helpless and expos'd?
Arouse myself! I cannot, nor will I.
I've been struck down, and there, where struck, I'll lie.
He shall be ever in my thoughts, if ne'er
Within my arms. I'll never loose him thence.

Stil. Serena, think you not that I need help—
That my life's blasted as yours is? Let us
Still walk together now we are alone.

Ser. Why did you trust him all alone with them?
I warned you—told you—had foreseen it all—
Here—in this palace—in this very room.
And now all's o'er, I moan the dead. You say
That danger threatens us. Let danger come!
I would the murderers themselves were here.
A woman, I would pale their very souls!

Stil. You'll forgive me?

[*Kisses her.*]

Ser.

May God forgive us both!

[*Exit SERENA.*]

Stil. I must away; she must not see me die.
I'll send the holy Bishop here to her,

Confess my sins with him, and then I'll on
To meet the Count, my executioner.
This lightning stroke has pierc'd my closèd eye,
And the now-coming thunder-crash is death.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A public Street near STILICHO's country residence.
In front, towards the left, the porch of Cathedral. Time,
afternoon.*

Stil. [*solus*]. I'm as a shipwrecked pilot now, ship-
wrecked

By sunken rock, with wind and tide with me,
Clutching a spar, alone, amidst the dark,
On the rough waters as they roll along—
The waters that have wash'd away my kin.
Alone, almost in presenee of my God.
What was my greatness, power, strength? A child
Drops from a height a stone and outs them all.

[*A chant sounds from within Cathedral.*]

Poor boy! Dead! dead! midst all this life. Yet,
hush!

They cannot hurt nor murder thee again,
Though thy strong father's absent e'er so far.
And she—she prayed forgiveness for me too.
How is't I've been so proud, so bold, so blind?
Despise the feelings of the meanest man,
And, howsoever honest is your aim,
You'll live to feel he's seen the slight.

How strangely clear all seems! How this bright
earth,

Where gleams of sunshine gild our very graves,

Looks now old-fashioned, and deceptive too!

Oh! how I long to ope men's blinded eyes!

Look at the poor, the self-tormenting monk;

The senator, who's sating with revenge;

The Count, who's gained more than he'll care to
keep—

Ungrateful? That is his affair, not mine—

Rufinus whom I slew, and Lucius,

And then—ah, happy time!—foremost of all,

My late dear master Theodosius.

I see them all. And then, O God, my wife—

Serena! Yes, 'tis hard to leave thee here;

And yet perhaps 'tis best for your own sake.

O God! the cursèd hellishness of sin!

But for my pride, my self-sufficiency—

Enter Begging Woman, with three Children.

What! want to beg of me! Begone—begone!

Your happiness but taunts my misery.

Woman. Oh! my great lord, my little ones are
starving. You must hear me—they're starving—
starving—wasting for want of food. They must, they
shall have food to eat. [*Child cries.*] I can't bear it
any longer.

Stil. Good woman, till we've tried we never know

What we can bear.

[*Gives her a gold coin.*]

Begone. Thank God, not me.

It's not my own.

[*Exeunt Woman and Child.*]

And never will be yours.

A piece of gold to clear her misery !
One bit of earth ! Oh ! 'tis a funny world.
Three children, and she said that she was poor !
What worth is life to her who cares not for 't ?
What harm is death to him who longs for it ?
Yet, now I've spent it all, I 'gin to feel
The value of short time is infinite—
Now that the battle's o'er that's ne'er re-fought,
The everlasting stake strove for. O death !
Stern usher to the grave's unrobing room,
Why does thy present aspect move me so—
Me, who've confronted you so oft before ?
Make me look back along my number'd years,
See all the follies that they each unfold,
Stripp'd of the colours I had put on them ?
Oh, how my best, my fairest, work shrinks up !
Oh, how my devil-spots grow deeper black !
Oh, how the chances I've let slip spread out,
And time, that I've so slighted, sits apart
As priceless as she's unapproachable !

[*Hymn sounds inside Cathedral.*]

Hark, hark ! It is the closing hymn. [A pause.]

Its sounds

Of mercy raise my soul with them to Heaven—
That future home in other distant lands

That, like a royal bride, I go to gain ;
Pray God, to serve Him better far than here.

Sacristan opens church door. STILICHO enters church.

Sacr. [standing at porch]. Great Stilicho himself ! I
thought he'd gone

Up to the wars some days ago. Perhaps
He's going now ; and, like a good Christian
As he is, comes to see the bishop first.
He might as well have been in time for nonoe.
'Tis strange ! I've seen him here before alone,
Tho' he's oft absent on the highest days—
It is more noble, I suppose. What lies
Those palace servants tell. " He'll not be back
For years," they said. I'll have the joke of them
This time. What's that ? It is some cavalry !
'Twas a good guess of mine, 'twas very good.
They're going now—waiting for him, perhaps.
Ay ! they're coming here.

Enter COUNT HERACLIAN, LAMPADIUS, and several Horsemen.

Her. Here's some one at last.
Good man, can'st tell me whether the great lord
Stilicho's got back from Rome ?

Sacr. Noble sir,
I knew not that he'd been to Rome. Though now
You mention it, perhaps 'twas what his slave
Alluded to, when he by accident—
By merest accident—

Lam. Is he now here?

Is he at his palace now? ay or no?

Sacr. You've flurried me, good lord! He is not there,

He's here.

Lam. Here! Great Jove!

Sacr. I'll haste to tell him

That you are come, or would you sooner go

Yourself, great lords?

Her. Good man, perchance, he's left?

Sacr. He has but just now come, since I've been here.

Her. Mayhap, he's gone out at the other door?

Sacr. He could not, my good lords, that leads but to

The holy convent cells.

Her. You've been here since

He first went in?

Sacr. I've been here?—yes, my lords.

Her. Then go, good man, and say to him

A humble friend has brought a message from

The Emperor for him, and waits without.

No more, mind; say no more.

Sacr. No more, my lords.

[*Exit Sacristan.*]

Lam. He's heard of our approach and fled to church.

How can we get him out? There's no mob here,

Good Count. That's in your favour much. 'Tis not

As if he'd refuge in a church at Rome.

Her. [*to troops.*] Form in a semicircle round the porch.

Let the near rank dismount. Let no one leave
This church, whoe'er he be, without my word.

[*Soldiers obey.*]

Tie up the horses out of sight. Guard them.

[*To LAMPADIUS.*] He can't know what's been done. He
would have kept

His set of savages ; 'twas his sole chance.

Nothing can save him now. Your timid fear,

That he'd disguis'd himself as one of them,

Was idle, as you see.

Lam. It was. Yet still

Why let them pass unchalleng'd ?

Her. Nay, why play

With naked swords unnecessarily ?

Lam. All hangs so now on speed.

Her. Tut, tut, my lord,

You're nightmared still with those two horsemen
who

You thought were foll'wing some miles off, when

We topp'd the hill.

Lam. You might as well have look'd.

Her. What use ? Think yesterday, but act to-day.

Lam. Ay, wise, most wise. You see he does not
come !

He must know all. Hark !—steps !

Her. Keep calm, my lord.

Lam. [*aside.*] Ay, as a murder'd corpse.

Enter STILICHO from porch.

Stil. Good morn,
my lords.

Lam. [to HERACLIAN.] Beware of treachery ; he
knew 'twas us !

Stil. You fear but your own self, Lampadius.

Her. You are more cheerful to receive, than I,
In this sad instance, am to give. Howe'r,
All duties must be done. Thou knowest mine,
My noble lord, I see !

Stil. Heraclian,
You have th' Imperial mandate for your acts ?

Her. I have.

[*Produces mandate and offers it to STILICHO.*]

Stil. [*Refuses mandate.*] Nay, nay, your word's
enough. You know
I've ever trusted you.

Lam. Disarm him, men.

Stil. [*waving men off on their preparing to advance.*]
Keep back ! Heraclian, pray urge me not.
You know this sword can cut its path through you :
Or, if I choose, this church is shield secure
Till darkness lends its mask for my escape.
I seek not to prolong my life ; do you
Not force me to't.

Her. [*to troops.*] Back ! touch him not, my men.
[*To STILICHO.*] Escape is hopeless ; all my cavalry
Enring the town outside.

Lam. There's treachery,

Or, as a soldier, he'd not fear to die—
Though bullies are but cowards.

Stil. Taunts touch not—
A mountain trembling from its melting streams
Heeds not the outside rain: which lashes it.
Your second arrow cuts your first one out ;
My son in exile, his new home is mine.
Good Count, do quickly what you have to do—
Not long ago, indeed this very day,
(How long it seems !) my torture was begun,
And now 'tis o'er. O God ! Thou'rt merciful.

Her. A narrow-headed block is all we want.
My noble lord, dost know where 't can be found ?

Stil. The pilgrim's knee-board in the porch will do.

Her. 'Tis your own choice. Now, Scaro, use your
sword.

Stil. Farewell, my lord.

Her. My noble lord, farewell.

[*STILICHO and Soldier retire into porch.*]

Lam. Why, Count, he will escape back to the church.

[*A pause.*]

Stil. [*from inside the porch.*] Falter not, man, but
strike a manly stroke.

There's my purse for you, when you've cut it free.

[*A short pause.*]

Accept my broken life for Jesus' sake. [*A sound.*]

Enter Soldier from porch.

Soldier. I will not have his purse. He gave it me—

Her. I want it not.

Lam. Take mine, my man, for it;
'Twill be a trophy I should like to keep.

[*They exchange purses.*]

[*To HERACLIAN.*] And now, my lord, if you will give
it me,

I'll fix the mandate on his palace-gate.

Her. I may not part with it.

Lam. Not part with it?
You've fulfilled it.

Her. 'Twas my authority,
And it must be returned.

Lam. Dost mean it so?

Her. Certainly.

Lam. I care not. I must see her.
You'll still go with me to the palace-gate?

Her. My work is done, and a sad work it was.
[*To troops.*] Go to the church and fetch a priest. I'll
leave

The body in their holy charge.

Lam. I go
On to the palace, ay, if by myself.

[*Aside.*] The ladies shall join in my triumph now!

Her. I'll wait for you outside the town, my lord.
We must away from here, I cannot stay.

Lam. You'll let an escort go with me, good Count?

Her. I can't say nay to that. Go, six of you,
And guard the senator Lampadius.

Lam. Well, well, 'tis good. Now, my men, follow me.

[*Exeunt LAMPADIUS and six Soldiers.*]

Her. [*aside.*] The man is mad. Howe'er, I could not more

Persuade him than I did; and he's a guard.

A Priest [*from inside porch.*] A murdered man!
Good God! What's this? Who is't?

Priest appears in porch.

Her. Good father, 'twas the Emperor's command.
I'll leave the body to your holy care;
They're the most noble Stilicho's remains.

Priest. Oh, wait! oh, wait! I will be back. Oh, wait!

[*Exit Priest.*

Her. [*aside.*] Curse you, I must. Yes! yes! I'd better wait. [*A long pause.*]

Bishop [*inside porch.*] Ah! 'tis too true—dead!
dead! Is this your war?

[*Enter Bishop and Priests.*

Who is it that has killed great Stilicho?

Her. Most holy father, that sad sight proclaims
The empire's vengeance on a traitor's guilt.

Bishop. Who executed it?

Her. I did myself—

The Count Heraclian.

Bishop. I am no judge,
Thank God I'm not a judge; I judge no man;
An awful office. There's been some mistake;
My lord, believe me, there's been some mistake.
Pray God, 'twas but mistake.

Her. It cannot be,
Most holy father. Here's the mandate, clear.
Where can there be mistake? There cannot be.
Forgive me if I've said what I should not—
But why pray God that there's been some mistake?

Bishop. Oh! would you wish indeed great Stilicho
To've been the traitor he was thought to be?
I knew his inmost heart, my lord, too well.
Believe me there has been some dire mistake.
And all so quickly. Oh! 'tis pitiful.

Her. So quickly! Why, he urged it on himself—
Was self-convicted and prepared for all—
He tacitly acknowledg'd his full guilt.
So quick! Don't you yourself too quickly judge?

Enter two Messengers.

1st Messenger. Right noble lord, the Count Heraclian.
[*Hands him despatch.*]

Her. [*reads.*] What! is this so? Great Heaven aid
me now!

This is most strange, most sad, most horrible!
Deceiver! traitor! fiend!—Stilicho!
This countermands the mandate I've obeyed,
And substitutes Lampadius for you!

Bishop. The Lord be praised. Oh! it is pitiful!

Her. Why did he urge on time? [*To Messengers.*]
Why did not you?

One hour, nay half, aye less, and he'd been safe.
Why came you here so late? Come, answer me.

1st Messenger. The drunken soldiers forc'd me to
dismount

And drink with them, and then my horse was stolen.

I saw you mount the hill and beckoned you.

Look at our horses ; have we spared them aught ?

2nd Messenger. Your troops outside the town delay'd
him much ;

Forbidding him to enter, though he nam'd

His errand, and his royal master's name,

Till I arriv'd. I was sent after him.

[*Offers second despatch.*]

Her. Oh, sad mistake ! Would you'd not been too late !

Bishop. A slave may free the spirit, but a prince

Can't re-embodify it. One hour ago,

And that poor piece of clay restrain'd a soul

As noble as was e'er encaged in flesh ;

Vexed it with ills, fevered it with heat,

Numbed it with cold, chained it—Prometheus-like—

To this gross earth, forced it to feed on it,

And made its very joys half sensuous.

But now 'tis free, free as the light behind

The cloud. The earth—nay, the o'erhanging sky—

Confines it not, forgiven, purified,

And perfected ; all future human lives,

And those all past, are open to its ken,

And more, their Maker and their Saviour too !

[*A short pause.*]

2nd Messenger. May't please you now, the Count

Heraclian.

[*Hands him a despatch.*]

Her. What is't you trouble me with now? [*Reads.*]

O Fate!

Your blows strike home at once. What, Alaric
Advanc'd already into Italy!

Got past the army 'camped up in the North!

This is most overwhelming news, indeed!

[*Aside.*] I must obey my orders, tho' he's dead.

I shall at once back to Ravenna's walls;

The Emperor at least must be made safe.

[*Aloud.*] This is most unexpected news indeed.

[*To Messenger.*] How came you here so soon? Don't
answer me.

Enter SERENA, in undress.

Ser. Away, away, away! Where is my lord?

[*She forces her way through lines of soldiers.*]

Bishop. Lady, his shade has passed away to light.

[*SERENA rushes into porch, where she shrieks.*]

Bishop and Priest enter porch.

Bishop. [*aside.*] Go, fetch some sisters; they will
tend her best.

Her. [*aside.*] This is Lampadius again; the fool!

A Trooper. Didst see her eyes?—her lord ne'er look'd
so grand.

Her. Poor lady! how her shriek rings in my ear!

Majestic as she's ever been till now,

She look'd as helpless as the merest child

Before the broken fragments of a cup,

Just slipped from out her hands. We must away.

What's that?

Trooper. A horse got riderless, my lord.

Another Trooper. 'Tis one of ours.

Another Trooper. 'Tis Haux's horse,
my lord.

Her. Go, some of you, and find out where he is.

[*Exeunt some Troopers.*]

[*Several Sisters carry out SERENA in a fainting fit from porch into the light, and chafe her hands.*]

A Sister. We want some water, 'twould refresh her most.

Another Sister. Had we not better take her to our home!

[*Exeunt Sisters with her through porch.*]

Bishop. [*to Priest.*] Send for lay brothers to remove the corpse,

His honoured clay, to my own house, until

His longer resting-place can be prepar'd.

Her. [*aside.*] The Goths advanc'd, and he but just now dead!

How will the court, th' Emperor, meet me!

[*Exit Priest.*]

Enter some Troops with MAXIMUS.

Max. Is his most noble lady safe, my lord?

Her. She is, good Maximus.

Max. Then I am yours.

Her. What mean you?

Max. To follow my late lord.

I met Lampadius, and paid my debt.

I've nothing more to do. You have, my lord!

Her. How came you here? How came the lady here?

What have you done, too, with Lampadius?

Max. I got here 'fore you did, and told my lord
All that had happened on that frightful field,
But uselessly. He would not move; told me
To discharge the rough allies; I did this:
And to protect his wife; I tried to do't:
But she, on hearing that strange cavalry
Were round the town, was seized with sudden fright
For her great lord; said she'd remembered that
He'd left, without her bidding him farewell;
And so o'erworded and o'erthreaten'd me,
That I, fearing to do her violence
Or let her suffer it, fain follow'd her
From out the palace onward here, until
We met Lampadius with dev'lish grin,
Which touched her not, but told its tale to me.
I could not pass him, e'en to keep with her.
My men engag'd his guard, whilst I took him
All to myself. The wordy, doughty coward
Clung to his life as liars cling to lies;
At first talk'd big, with fearful threatenings, then
Offer'd me words, excuses, all his wealth,
Besought my pity, and then thrust at me,
Dying with curses ringing on his tongue.
Now I fall over him I fall content.

Her. Not so. I thank you for forestalling me.

Max. What do you mean, my lord?

Her.

'Tis a sad tale.

I'd scarcely put in force the mandate 'gainst

The noble Stilicho, ere I receiv'd

An order substituting him you've slain.

Max. Oh, blind, blind fate! where do you lead us to?

Wise men to prate that fate is sensible!

Fall'n! fall'n! fall'n! Men call ruins beautiful!

Her. Could any luck be harder than mine's been!

Max. Does she know all of this?

Her.

Not any yet.

Poor lady, she has been insensible.

Max. Where is she now, my lord?

Her.

Now, Maximus?

The holy sisters of the convent near

Are tending her. Would I could stay to learn

She was herself again! 'Twas a sad sight,

Her writhed face quite darker than her dress,

Bespotted with his blood! I *must* away.

Go you with us, good Maximus?

Max.

Not so,

My lord, with your good leave.

Her.

Nay, I've no right

To order you. I'm o'er the household troops,

And cannot tell I ever shall be more.

I'll leave you to guard her. Hast heard the Goths

Already have begun their hostile march?

Max. Indeed, my lord, I'd not.

Her. [*handing him second despatch.*] Read, Maximus.

[*MAXIMUS reads.*]

Max. It is impossible that they could know't.

'Twas but such rumour as has tortur'd oft

Your late dear lord.

Her. Thank you for your advice!

Max. My lord, forgive me. But reflect how far

The news had had to travel in the time;

More than a hundred miles, at least, each day!

Her. 'Tis not for me to doubt the royal word.

Max. So, my lord; forgive me. Where do you think
You will encounter them, if I may ask?

Her. I'm ordered to guard o'er the Emperor.

Max. Indeed. Who will oppose them, then, my lord?

Her. I know not. [*To soldiers.*] Men, remount.

[*To all.*] Withdraw. Farewell.

[*Exeunt HERACLIAN, Troops, and Messengers.*]

Max. 'Tis strange! How hard they tried to take
my life

The other day, when 'twas protected so,

Yet now he's gone, it is not worth the gift;

Nor, as I 'gin to think, the keeping of 't.

My dear young lord—my very pride of life—

And my dear master, gone, his lady safe—

Why should I stay? I cannot mourn for him;

For had the messenger arrived in time,

Or had he acted as I asked him to,

He would have felt an outcast as I feel:

He could have saved the empire, not himself.

And 'twas not worthier to be saved than he—
No! 'tis a conq'ring Alaric it wants,
And will now get. How quickly changes come!

Enter Priests with couch; they proceed to the porch.

They're come to bear it off—I will not look,
I've seen too many corpses as it is.

[*To Priests.*] How is the lady now?

A Priest. We know not yet.

Another Priest. She's just come to. Our holy father's
Soothing her.

Another Priest. Aye, and all the sisters, too.

Max. You'll see another corpse far up the way.
Priests, is it right to save one's food? Look you,
To seek out death, instead of waiting for't?

A Priest. Mock not at death, and in its presence, too.

Max. May, or may not, a Christian kill himself?

Another Priest. No more than he may kill his enemy.

Max. No more! Yet was my lord a Christian man,
And Alaric, a thorough soldier, too.

I will not do't, though I do nothing else.

Let's see: Protect his lady! That's been done.

Dismiss th' Alani! That, too, has been done—

Send o'er to Rome to close the gates on them!

I have not sent, nor can—I'll go myself.

Come, I have something yet to do for him,

And for Rome, too; but who cares now for Rome?

[*Exit MAXIMUS.* Priests bear out the body of
STILICHO on the couch.]

FINIS.



